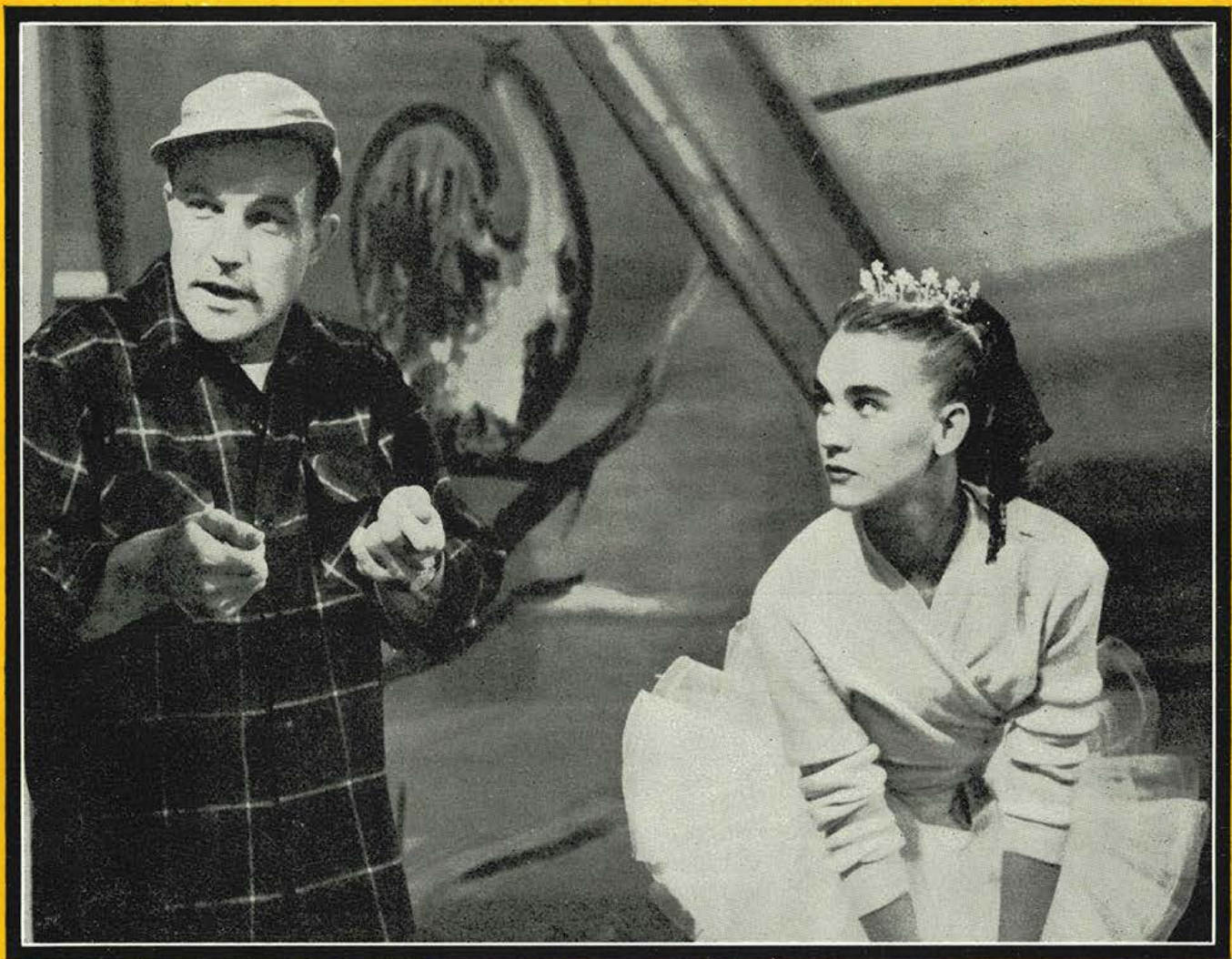


JANUARY-MARCH 1953

3/6

SIGHT AND SOUND

*The Film
Quarterly*



HOLLYWOOD'S ANTI-RED BOOMERANG: Karel Reisz

Also

Postwar French Films

Chaplin and Limelight

ALISTAIR COOKE

THOROLD DICKINSON

PUDOVKIN

HARVEST FROM THE SKIES



Tells the story of the inception and growth of the Billingham Division of I.C.I. and the manufacture of nitrogenous fertilizers from the nitrogen of the air.

* * *

Also available as supporting items for programmes are three issues of the I.C.I. Cinemagazine

'PANORAMA'

You may borrow these films on application to

I.C.I. FILM LIBRARY

IMPERIAL CHEMICAL HOUSE, MILLBANK, LONDON, S.W.1.



There are possibly no more than ten books written in the past twenty-five years that demand an indispensable place on the bookshelves of every film enthusiast. We at this shop are not encouraging the wrath of more knowledgeable devotees by listing our choice of ten but say that among our selection would be a copy of the new book by Bela Balazs . . . "Theory of the Film—character and growth of an art". The author, who died only recently, wrote about film for thirty years and in that time established himself as one of Europe's leading theoreticians. In addition his vast practical experience in every sphere of film production made him an expert whose advice was constantly sought on all matters connected with the film.

In this book Balazs attempts to lay down the fundamental laws relating to film art in the light of its historical development over the past fifty years . . . the formative years in the author's opinion . . . since he saw the cinema as a virtually unexplored means of artistic and cultural expression.

This book costs twenty-five shillings, the result of thirty years of thought and practical work contained in two hundred and eighty-seven pages.

Get your copy today from:

THE INTERNATIONAL BOOKSHOP

52 CHARING CROSS ROAD

LONDON W.C.2

The shop for books on film and theatre

Better Books

offer BRIEF POINTERS TO CURRENT FILMS

This list has been compiled for us by the staff of SIGHT AND SOUND and we hope it may serve as a useful general guide to the principal films now in British cinemas

ANGEL FACE (R.K.O.). Jean Simmons' first Hollywood picture; she appears as a neurotic young murderess in a rather slow and unlikely melodrama. (Robert Mitchum, Herbert Marshall; director, Otto Preminger.)

ASSIGNMENT—PARIS (Columbia). Heroic reporters from Paris office of the *Herald Tribune* foil the Reds. Mediocre Iron Curtain melo, quite slickly done. (Dana Andrews, George Sanders, Marta Toren; director, Robert Parrish.)

BECAUSE YOU'RE MINE (M.G.M.). Mario Lanza as an opera star caught in the draft: tedious. (Doretta Morrow; director, Alexander Hall.)

***CASQUE D'OR—Golden Marie (Film Traders).** Jacques Becker's period melodrama about a Parisian courtesan and her tragic love affair. A brilliant film. (Simone Signoret, Serge Reggiani.)

CRIMSON PIRATE, The (Warners). Pirate adventures with a sense of humour; acrobatics, chases, fighting, all quite good fun. (Burt Lancaster, Nick Cravat, Eva Bartok; director, Robert Siodmak.)

EVERYTHING I HAVE IS YOURS (M.G.M.). Technicolor musical featuring new star team of Marge and Gower Champion; a few pleasant moments, but not enough. (Director, Robert Z. Leonard.)

FORBIDDEN CITY (G.C.T.). First Chinese feature to be shown commercially here; a slow, static account of palace intrigues in the 1890's. Mainly for the curious. (Chou Chuan, Tang Go-Ching, Shu Shih; director, Chu Shih-Ling.)

GALA FESTIVAL (Continental Concorde). Russian film made up of opera and ballet excerpts, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake* and *Prince Igor*. Effective record of stage performances. (Ulanova, Barsova, Semyonova; director, Vera Stroyeva.)

IRON MISTRESS, The (Warners). Technicolor biography of Jim Bowie, inventor of the knife; stereotyped romance and adventure. (Alan Ladd, Virginia Mayo; director, Gordon Douglas.)

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK (Warners). Hollywood-style pantomime in Super-cinacolor, featuring Abbot and Costello. (Buddy Baer; director, Jean Yarbrough.)

KON-TIKI (R.K.O.). Thor Heyerdahl's remarkable film record of his Peru-Polynesia journey on a raft. Much interesting material.

***LIMELIGHT (United Artists).** The new Chaplin: a masterpiece. (Claire Bloom, Sydney Chaplin, Buster Keaton.)

LION AND THE HORSE, The (Warners). Simple story of cowboy's capture of and devotion to a wild horse. Fair going for animal lovers. (Steve Cochran, Ray Teal; director, Louis King.)

***MIRACLE IN MILAN (Regent).** De Sica's fairy tale about a settlement of poor people outside Milan; beautiful and touching. (Francesco Golisano, Emma Gramatica, Brunella Bovo.)

MY PAL GUS (Fox). Millionaire father copes with awful child, falls for school-teacher, decides that money isn't everything; pleasant in parts. (Richard Widmark, Joanne Dru, Audrey Totter; director, Robert Parrish.)

NARROW MARGIN, The (R.K.O.). Slick and competent little crime story set on a long distance train journey. (Charles McGraw, Marie Windsor; director, Richard Fleischer.)

ONE-PIECE BATHING SUIT, The (M.G.M.). Lavish, rather dull Technicolor biography of Annette Kellerman, swimmer and bathing suit pioneer. Esther Williams in her element. (Victor Mature, Walter Pidgeon; director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE (M.G.M.). Reconstruction of the *Mayflower* voyage; conventional slice of Technicolored Hollywood history. (Spencer Tracy, Gene Tierney, Van Johnson; director, Clarence Brown.)

PRISONER OF ZENDA, The (M.G.M.). Technicolor remake of old stager. Less action and poorer performances than in the Colman-Fairbanks version, but still fairly entertaining. (Stewart Granger, James Mason, Deborah Kerr; director, Richard Thorpe.)

RETREAT, HELL (Warners). Violent, jingoistic treatment of story of U.S. Marines in Korea. (Frank Lovejoy, Richard Carlson; director, Joseph H. Lewis.)

ROAD TO BALI (Paramount). Back to the *Road* series; the mixture as before, but rather below par. (Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour; director, Hal Walker.)

SEVEN DEADLY SINS, The (International). One sketch dramatising each of them; long and mainly deady Franco-Italian production, with one interesting episode by Autant-Lara. (Gerard Philipe, Michele Morgan, Francoise Rosay, Isa Miranda, Noel-Noel, Henri Vidal etc.; directors, Rossellini, Yves Allegret, Carlo Rim etc.)

SHE'S WORKING HER WAY THROUGH COLLEGE (Warners). Third-rate college musical about a burlesque queen's right to an education. "Adapted," unhappily, from the Thurber play *The Male Animal*. (Virginia Mayo, Ronald Reagan, Gene Nelson; director, Bruce Humberstone.)

STEEL TRAP, The (Fox). Assistant bank manager steals a million dollars and decides to put it back. Elementary little gripper, quite good. (Joseph Cotten, Teresa Wright; director, Andrew Stone.)

TOP SECRET (A.B.-Pathe). Lower fourth farce about a cretinous plumber mistaken for a scientist and kidnapped by the Russians. (George Cole, Oscar Homolka; director, Mario Zampi.)

TRENT'S LAST CASE (British Lion). Very dignified, well furnished version of famous detective story, with Margaret Lockwood re-upholstered as a far from merry widow. (Michael Wilding, Orson Welles; director, Herbert Wilcox.)

WOMEN OF TWILIGHT (Independent). Baby-farming melodrama taken from London stage success. Britain's first X. (Freda Jackson, Rene Ray; director Gordon Parry.)

(Films reviewed in this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND are not included in the Film Guide.)

Those marked with an asterisk are especially recommended

Better Books

booksellers of 94 CHARING CROSS RD., LONDON, W.C.2

A stimulating modern bookshop that stocks and displays the best of books—from Chaucer to Anouilh

SIGHT AND SOUND

Published by the British Film Institute

VOLUME 22 (New Quarterly Series) No. 3

JANUARY - MARCH 1953

Contents

Features

THE FRONT PAGE	97
IN THE PICTURE	98
THE SEVENTH ART	108
HERE CAME THE CLOWNS	109
THE PLEASURE GARDEN	114
AROUND THE SET	119
BACKGROUND TO THE THIEF Clarence Greene, Russell Rouse	138
<i>They Made Me a Myth</i> (4): has had to be held over owing to lack of space	

Articles

FRENCH FILMS SINCE THE WAR	Jean Queval	102
<i>The Film Folio</i> (2): A CRITIC'S TESTAMENT	Alistair Cooke	112
STANISLAVSKY'S SYSTEM IN THE CINEMA	V. Pudovkin	115
"THE ELEGANT MELANCHOLY OF TWILIGHT"	Gavin Lambert	123
HOLLYWOOD'S ANTI-RED BOOMERANG	Karel Reisz	132
<i>The Sulky Fire</i> (3): THE LIGHT THAT FAILED	Peter Price	139

Reviews

JEUX INTERDITS	Catherine de la Roche	127	<i>In Brief: PICKWICK PAPERS, WHAT PRICE GLORY</i>	131
PERSONAL PRODUCTIONS	Penelope Houston	128	BOOK REVIEWS	
BIRTH OF A NATION	Lindsay Anderson	129	SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN	Thorold Dickinson
FOLLY TO BE WISE	Daniel Farson	130	Other Reviews	Duncan Crow, Jeffrey Bernard, Harold Lang
THE THIEF and THE FOURPOSTER	Penelope Houston	130	THE SOUND TRACK	John Huntley
SOUVENIRS PERDUS	Elizabeth Russell	130	CORRESPONDENCE	145

ON THE COVER: Gene Kelly directing *Invitation to the Dance*, with Claude Bessy

Copyright in all articles originally published in SIGHT AND SOUND is reserved to the British Film Institute.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2 (Temple Bar 1642).

SIGHT AND SOUND is sent free every quarter to members of the Institute: annual subscription rate (4 issues) 15s. including postage; U.S.A.: \$3.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Denis Forman, Gavin Lambert, Ernest Lindgren, Stanley Reed.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Gavin Lambert.

ASSISTANT: Penelope Houston.

PRINTED BY Skyline Press, London, England.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick, Ltd., London, and Skyline Press.

ADVERTISING OFFICES: Husey & Co., 92 Fleet Street, E.C.4 (Central 8209).

CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A.: Harold Leonard
FRANCE: Francis Koval
ITALY: Robert Hawkins
GERMANY: Gerd Treuhaft
SCANDINAVIA: Fynn Syversen

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *Mother, The Living Corpse, Storm Over Asia, The General, Mack Sennett Comedies, Hallelujah I'm a Bum, Blockheads, The Rink, The Immigrant, Speedy, Birth of a Nation, Que Viva Mexico!, Le Diable au Corps, Antoine et Antoinette, Bataille du Rail, Farrebique, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*

G.F.D. for *High Treason*

WILCOX-NEAGLE PRODUCTIONS for *The Beggars' Opera*

LONDON FILMS for *Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Sullivan, Folly To Be Wise*

UNITED ARTISTS for *Limelight, Red Planet Mars, The Thief*

COLUMBIA for *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T, The Member of the Wedding, Crime of the Century*

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *The Bad and the Beautiful, Invitation to the Dance, It's a Big Country, The Red Danube, Julius Caesar*

PARAMOUNT for *My Son, John*

20TH CENTURY FOX for *The Iron Curtain*

R.K.O. RADIO for *The Whip Hand*

WARNER BROS. for *I Confess, I Was a Communist for the F.B.I., Big Jim McLain*

FILM TRADERS for *Jeux Interdits*

CAHIERS DU CINEMA for *Les Dernières Vacances*

CONTINENTAL CONCORDE for *Gala Festival*

RUPERT HART DAVIS Ltd. for picture of Alistair Cooke

Oil

ON THE SCREEN

A series of films, sponsored by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd., has been made to illustrate the more fascinating chapters in the story of the oil industry. One of these films is described briefly in this notice. Details of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau.*

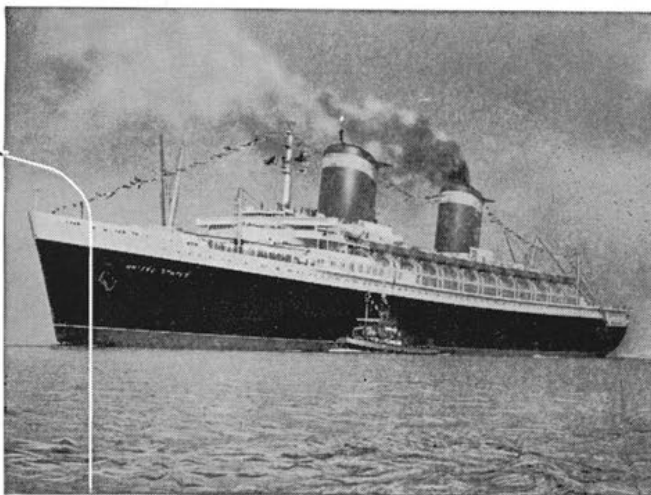
All these films have been made to entertain as well as instruct and are already enjoying a wide distribution in many countries. They are of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes.



Sponsored by
ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL COMPANY, LTD.,
LONDON

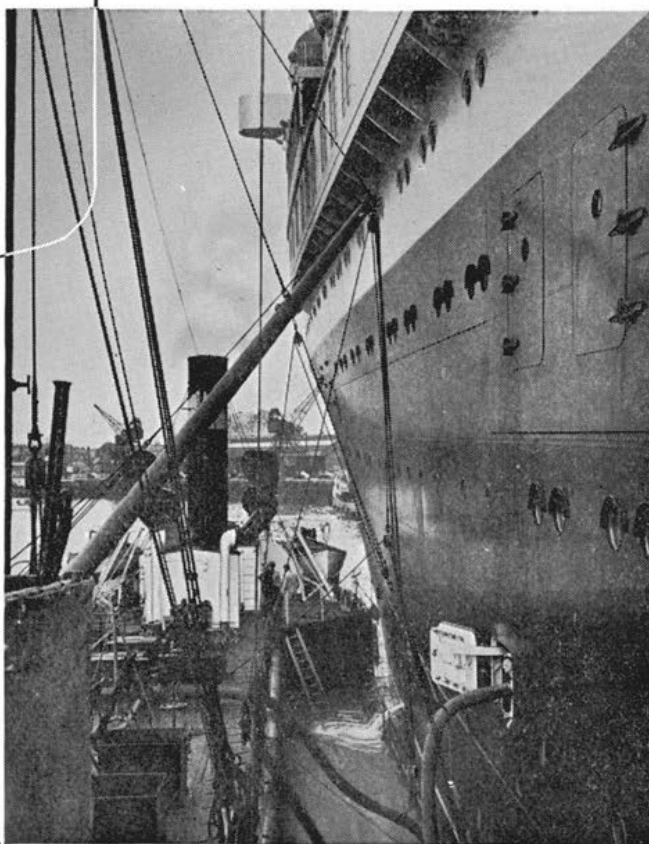
* Copies may be borrowed
FREE OF CHARGE
on application to:—

PETROLEUM FILMS BUREAU,
29 NEW BOND STREET, W.1.



WARM WELCOME

The world's fastest transatlantic liner, S.S. *United States*, arrives in Southampton to be welcomed by excited crowds ashore and afloat. When the tumult has subsided, the turn-round work begins and the oil barge *Attendant* replenishes the liner's fuel tanks. This non-technical ten-minute sound film tells a most entertaining story of one aspect of Anglo-Iranian's International Oil Bunkering Service.



The Wonderful Year

Any year in the cinema, good or bad, is a freak. So many circumstances contribute to it, not least the inconsequences of distribution. Five of the notable films to reach Britain this year were in fact made between 1948 and 1951. However, we have had, for one reason and another, a remarkable year of movie-going. The movies may not be better than ever, but they are still as good as they ever were. SIGHT AND SOUND'S Oscars for 1952 present almost an *embarras de richesses*.

Film of the Year: *Limelight* (Chaplin, U.S.A.).

After this unique masterpiece come seven films, almost all of which, some readers will consider, have equal claim to first place. Distinctions being invidious, we list them alphabetically.

Casque d'Or (Jacques Becker, France).
Miracolo a Milano (de Sica, Italy).
Los Olvidados (Bunuel, Mexico).

The Quiet Man (Ford, U.S.A.).
Rashomon (Kurosawa, Japan).
The River (Renoir, India).

Tora-No-O (Kurosawa, Japan).

Four Oscaretttes follow; these films are less completely successful, or slighter, but they are still of great interest.

Death of a Salesman (Benedek, U.S.A.).
Paris 1900 (Nicole Vedres, France).

E' Primavera (Castellani, Italy).
Secret People (Thorold Dickinson, Britain).

Nor is this all, though the next list is the trickiest, since it includes and omits on the most personal level. It is simply a record of a few other films of note—unsuccessful but worthwhile experiments, exceptionally good entertainments, films with some memorable sequences. "Why didn't you include *The African Queen*? Or *Outcast of the Islands*? Or *The Marrying Kind*? Or *Les Enfants Terribles*?" There is no real answer; we can only say that these seemed to us, in their different ways, the best of the rest:

Brandy for the Parson (John Eldridge, Britain).
Pat and Mike (Cukor and the Kanins, U.S.A.).
Shadow in the Sky (Fred Wilcox-Ben Maddow, U.S.A.).

High Noon (Zinnemann, U.S.A.).
Mandy (Mackendrick, Britain).
Singin' in the Rain (Gene Kelly, U.S.A.).

* * *

Many performances have remained strongly in the memory. Chaplin, of course, in *Limelight*; and Marlon Brando in *Streetcar* and *Viva Zapata*, Trevor Howard in *Outcast*, Laughton in *Full House*, Fredric March in *Death of a Salesman*, Laurence Olivier in *Carrie*, Sidney Poitier in *Cry the Beloved Country*, Serge Reggiani in *Casque d'Or*, Valentina Cortese in *Secret People*, Edwige Feuillere in *Olivia*, Hepburn in *The African Queen*, Martita Hunt in *Treasure Hunt*, Dorothy McGuire in *Invitation*, and Signoret in *Casque d'Or*. Also two highly enjoyable double acts, Hepburn and Tracy in *Pat and Mike*, and Judy Holliday and Aldo Ray in *The Marrying Kind*; and the entire casts of *Rashomon* and *Tora-No-O*.

Amongst new or rising talents, particularly noticeable were Claire Bloom in *Limelight*, Dorothy Allison in *Mandy*, Jean Hagen in *Shadow in the Sky* and *Singin' in the Rain*, Kevin McCarthy in *Death of a Salesman*, Ralph Meeker in *Shadow in the Sky*, Dewey Martin in *The Big Sky*, and Denholm Elliott in *The Sound Barrier*.

Directors of significant talent who emerged in 1952 were Kurosawa (the two Japanese pictures) and Laslo Benedek (*Death of a Salesman*). Only two; this has been a year for the famous and the experienced.

Short films that did much to enliven the second half of the bill included *De Renoir à Picasso*, *El Dorado*, *Le Mans*, *Mirror of Holland*, *Muscle Beach*, *Return to Glennascaul* and *Visite à Picasso*. Specially welcome, too, have been Mr. Magoo and the U.P.A. cartoons—*Rooty Toot Toot* is undoubtedly the cartoon of the year.

In a year of notable revivals—*Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Hotel du Nord*, *The Southerner*, *King Kong*, *Birth of a Nation*, not to mention *Gone With the Wind*—the National Film Theatre opened (to pleasingly large audiences) and reaffirmed the enchantment of René Clair. *Le Voyage Imaginaire* and *Les Deux Timides*, not publicly shown here before, provided enjoyable surprises, and of the classics, *Sous les Toits* above all retained its magic.

Last, and least, a few notes in the margin. The comeback of the year, Joan Crawford in *Sudden Fear*, must not pass without a salute to a buoyant trouper; the charm of the musical numbers (Astaire and Vera Ellen) in *Belle of New York*, the breathtaking lunacy of *Red Planet Mars*, the delicious spectacle of Nina Foch as Marie Antoinette in *Scaramouche*, the phenomenon of Marilyn Monroe, and the old lady who said in the middle of *Quo Vadis*, "Look, there's a sweet little lion who hasn't got a Christian", must also be recorded.

IN THE PICTURE

To Live or Not to Live

DUNCAN CROW writes; Despite the valuable statistics published each quarter by the Board of Trade, which allow a detailed examination of the industry's affairs, there is no doubt that the best annual report on the economic health of British films is to be found in the accounts of the Rank Group. This is not to suggest that the Group's troubles and successes are all typical. Nevertheless, when they are dropped in the film pond they are big enough to create a tidal wave which swamps the ripples of detail.

The outstanding feature of the 1952 accounts concerned production. Two years before a loss of over £2 million was brought into account; in 1951 this was reduced to about £1½ million; but in 1952 net losses on film production amounted to only £146,515, or slightly less than the average cost of one first feature. As to the future, Mr. Rank stated that it had not been considered necessary to make any provision for losses on films released in 1952/53.

This result was not, of course, unexpected. The whole purpose of the extended Eady Plan was to give the average British feature a chance of recouping its production costs. Even so, it was reassuring to read that the theory was beginning to work out in practice. The healing of the production wound, added to a continued high trading profit from home exhibition (£3,202,764) and an increased profit from the manufacturing companies (£1,055,771), gave the Group a net profit, subject to tax and outside shareholders' interests, of £4,272,120, as against £2,769,949 in the previous year and £552,264 in 1950.

So much for the figures; taking them as a general indication of the industry's health, they mean that in 1953 it is going to be a very reasonable financial risk to invest in British film production. They should—whether they will or not is a different matter—encourage some of the "angels" to come down to the studios again. But if this more hopeful state of affairs is to last, 1953 will have to bring something else. Within the next few months it will be necessary either to make arrangements for another long-term extension of the Eady Fund beyond August 1954, when it is scheduled to end; or, if agreement is not possible, to substitute some other form of financial assistance to British producers.

In his statement Mr. Rank gave his opinion that, "unless arrangements have been completed by the spring of 1953 for an extension of



Two new British films with strong operatic connections. Above, a scene from Sidney Gilliat's "Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Sullivan". Amidst torrential rain, the laying of the foundation stone of D'Oyly Carte's Savoy Theatre. Peter Finch (D'Oyly Carte), Robert Morley (Gilbert), Isabel Dean (Mrs. Gilbert). Martyn Green (George Grossmith). Maurice Evans plays Sullivan.

the Eady scheme the present level of production will commence to fall, and by August, 1953, will be coming to a standstill. Producers realise that unless their forthcoming productions can be released early in 1954 they will not secure the benefit of the existing Eady Fund, and based on past experience a programme of films cannot recover its cost in these circumstances . . . It must always be remembered that a film production programme is not one which can be altered quickly, and that policy decisions once made normally do not become effective from a commercial point of view until many months later. It would be a tragedy if, owing to delay in dealing with the extension of the Eady scheme, all the work which producers as a whole have done to put their house in order should be disrupted and lost."

It is here that the tidal wave comes in. Even though the days of the Rank plethora are past, the level of production which the Group and its associates maintain has a crucial effect upon British feature-making as a whole. This effect is felt not only by those employed in the Rank studios, but by those who would be employed elsewhere. If Mr. Rank says that it is not profitable to produce films, then the independent film-maker has little chance of raising his £150,000 from any source, and Mr. Rank's statement contained the ominous sentence: "In so far as this Group is concerned we shall materially curtail film production in August, 1953, unless we know that the production side of the industry will be receiving support under a proper scheme after August, 1954."

Meantime, and until the Eady issue is resolved, critics of the group production organisation under which the N.F.F.C. has been taking the end risk on Pinewood films will have been glad to learn that British Film Makers Ltd. is to be wound up. For the current year the Rank Organisation is going to be its own "angel". Even so, many people in the industry think that the partial abandonment of the group scheme should in no way obscure the basic importance of the N.F.F.C. Some form of "Filmsbank" providing a steady flow of working capital would seem to be an essential element in maintaining a stable production industry in this country; nearly as important, in fact, as providing the subvention by which the industry can live.

A star is fitted out, watched by her director. Lana Turner, Kirk Douglas. "The Bad and the Beautiful" is a drama set in Hollywood, directed by Vincente Minnelli, with Gloria Grahame, Gilbert Roland, Dick Powell and Walter Pigeon also in the cast.



News from Paris

FRANCIS KOVAL writes: In spite of continuing talk about the crisis, 84 new feature films took the floor during 1952. It should be noted, though, that a number of distinguished talents—among them Cocteau, Bresson, Carné, Autant-Lara, Ophüls, Rouquier—were not concerned with any of them.

Between July and September no less than 30 new films were started, among them 8 Franco-Italian co-productions. Some of these are of more than average interest, notably: a version of *The Merchant of Venice*, made by Pierre Billon in Turin, with Michel Simon playing Shylock and Andrée Debar as Portia; a Gevacolor *La Dame aux Camélias* directed by Raymond Bernard, with Micheline Presle and Gino Cervi; a Technicolor *Lucrezia Borgia* by Christian Jaque, with Martine Carol and Pedro Armendariz.

In *Destinées*, three directors in different countries will each make a sketch about a famous woman. The first, written by Pierre Bost and Jean Aurenche and directed by Jean Delannoy, is a Jeanne d'Arc with Michèle Morgan (who has cut her hair for the purpose). The second is rumoured to be a Bergman-Rossellini co-production, and the third, to be made in England, is undecided. More co-productions—which are evidently catching on—are the Franco-German *Les Trois Amours de Wagner*, with Pierre Fresnay as the composer, and a projected life of the Bavarian King Ludwig II.

To return to less exotic things, Julien Duvivier has recently finished *La Fête à Henriette*, with Michel Auclair, Dany Robin and Hildegard Neff. Its writers, Henri Jean son and Duvivier, appear on the screen from time to time, arguing about the plot, and changing it, as it goes along; they did not want to play themselves, however, and chose respectively Louis Seigner and Henri Cremieux.

Jacques Becker reunites Daniel Gélin and Anne Vernon in *Rue de l'Estrapade*, written by Annette Wademant, author of *Edouard et Caroline*, and said to be in the same genre. An extremely interesting new venture is a film designed to run half an hour or so called *Le Grand Méliès*, conceived and directed by Georges Franju, known for some outstanding short films, *Le Sang des Bêtes*, *En Passant par la Lorraine* and *Hôtel des Invalides*. It is being made with the co-operation of Méliès' surviving relatives; his son, André Méliès, will in fact play his father, and Mme. Georges Méliès will play herself. Numerous extracts from Méliès' films will be included, and music will be written by Georges van Parys, whose score for Clair's *Les Belles de Nuit* has been considerably praised.



"The Beggar's Opera." Laurence Olivier as Macheath, surrounded by doxies, in a scene from the new Technicolor production directed by Peter Brook, adapted by Christopher Fry and Dennis Cannan, designed by Wakhevitch, and with music arranged by Arthur Bliss.

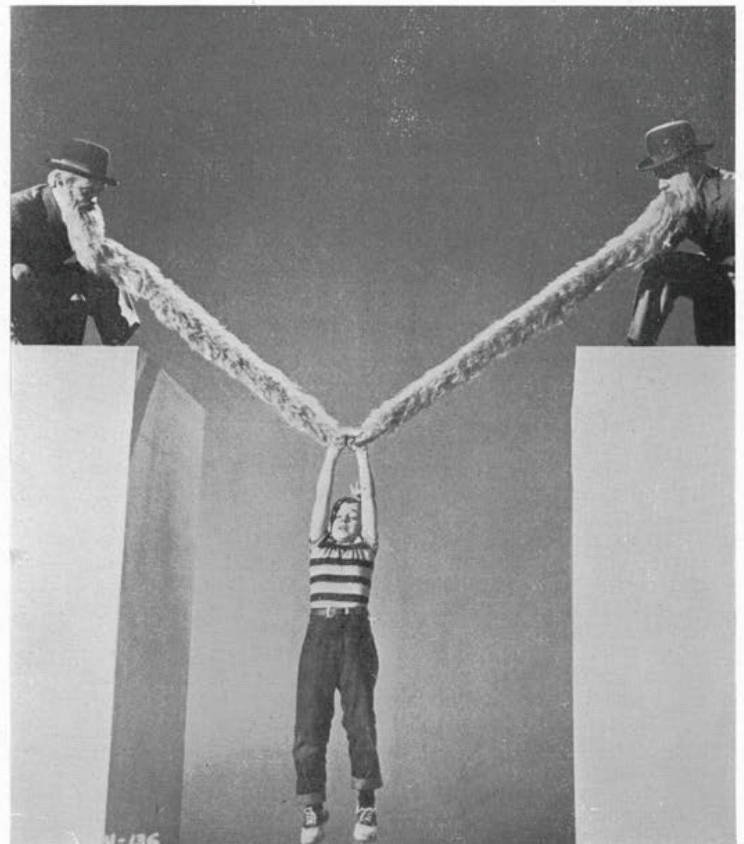
Unretiring John Ford

HAROLD LEONARD writes: It has turned out that *The Quiet Man* was not after all to be John Ford's last picture. Since the Korean documentary, and the *What Price Glory* remake for Fox, and before setting off to Africa for the Clark Gable-Ava Gardner *Mogambo* (a reworking of the old Clark Gable-Jean Harlow stranded show-girl in deepest safari formula out of *Red Dust*, M.G.M. 1932), Ford will have turned out still another exercise in reworking.

This time the material was originally used by himself, and *The Sun Shines Bright* is a second instalment from that body of Irwin S. Cobbean Southern juridical lore from which Ford drew, back in 1934, for *Judge Priest*, starring Will Rogers. The new film, modestly made in 28 days, to be released by Republic, has Merian Cooper as executive producer, in the independent production arrangement which has Ford as co-partner. Charles Winninger plays the erstwhile Will Rogers role, with John Russell and Arleen Whelan as young lovers, and Stephen Fetchit and Francis Ford carrying over intact from the 1934 film. Script is by Laurence Stallings, longtime friend of Ford's (and co-author of *What Price Glory*), and is based on three hitherto unused items from the *Saturday Evening Post*-ean corpus; the title-giving *The Sun Shines Bright*, *Mob from Massac*, and *The Lord Provides*.

And now further horizons still are indicated for the *Quiet Man*: Cinerama, America's dizzyingly successful first entry in the worldwide stereoscopic film handicap, has announced its claim to a Ford contribution. Ford's Argosy partner, Merian Cooper, who emerges as head of production for the ineffable bonanza, has announced that Ford will probably direct the second of the group of from two to four feature-length features Cinerama will undertake in its first year. This will be a civil war story. Cinerama, considered so far a distinct and difficult medium suited more to outdoor and spectacular than to narrative subjects, offers—the *Quiet Man* has been quoted as saying—"no problem at all." He was ready, he said, "to make the damnedest dramatic picture you ever saw."

Escape by beard: a scene from a new musical fantasy produced by Stanley Kramer, "The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T." The climax of this film is a little boy's dream of conducting 5,000 other little boys all at grand pianos. The author is Ted Geisel, who conceived "Gerald McBoing Boing."





Films from Mexico and Japan. Left, Dan O'Herlihy as "Robinson Crusoe," in Bunuel's new film (see also page 119). Right, scene from a new Japanese historical picture, "The Life of O'Haru," story of a famous courtesan.

Films for Children

STANLEY REED writes: Adult critics, except those naive enough to believe that they understand children, value the check of a child audience when viewing films made for the Clubs and were grateful to Children's Film Foundation for providing one at their first press show. The programme included *Swift Water*, made for Mary Field by Data, *The Stolen Plans* from Gaumont British and one of the *Our Magazine* series.

Those of the magazines I have seen all display the same virtues and the same single fault. Subjects are well chosen, the pace of exposition is exactly right, camerawork precise and clear: if an odour of adult condescension yet seems to pervade a whole composed of such admirable parts it is probably due to Frank Phillips' over-professional reading of the commentary; a gentler and more humorous voice is needed.

James Hill directing *The Stolen Plans* lacked the initial advantage of scenic setting or animal interest which so helped *Bush Christmas*, *The Mysterious Poacher* and *Riders of the New Forest*. The story is routine—attempt by foreign power to seize aircraft plans foiled by children's resource; there are several chases, including a rather disappointing one in the South Kensington Science Museum. From this conventional material, however, has been constructed a fast moving but easy-to-follow plot packed with lively incident. There are many happy touches, as when one of the villains pauses in the middle of a desperate fight to straighten a picture, but the best moments in the film are the occasional glimpses of the little-girl-next-door caught in hasty retreat from the camera or as a pair of eyes and a button nose over the top of the garden fence. Among the principals the girl heroine on the whole out-acts the boy hero, although one wonders why she had to be French, unless as a gesture to internationalism. Most of the adults stand up well to the stiff test of child competition. The notably unglamorous crooks are a skilful compound of the sinister and the comic. The master crook betrays himself at the outset by his slovenly eating from a paper bag while his two henchmen bungle and grovel alternately and pass on the dirty work to their unwilling accomplice, a retired safe-breaker turned clock-mender. The scenes in the latter's workshop, played against a background of tocks, chimes and cuckoos are particularly well done. Not quite up to the standard of the best of the C.E.F. films *The Stolen Plans* none the less gets C.F.F. away to a good start.

Swift Water, much inferior, is barely saved by an attractive subject—sailing adventures about a small coast town, with a dog to be saved from drowning and a nagging aunt to be reformed. Even allowing for the handicaps of post-recorded dialogue and sunless weather, the film is shoddy. Clumsy direction gets poor performances from children who look capable of better, so that though young audiences may find a vicarious thrill in the action they are denied the good company they have come to expect from a Mary Field film.

The Third Dimension

How near is it? At least three stereoscopic processes, with appropriate sound, are attracting much attention and speculation at the moment. The British films produced by Stereo-Techniques have been widely seen in London and Europe and are shortly to be launched in America. In America itself, a new feature film called *Bwana Devil* has impressed, notably by the physical impact of a kiss scene, in which the audience felt itself practically cheek-to-cheek with Barbara Britton.

But the most sensational success has been that of Cinerama, which employs a curved triptych screen and three projectors. A Cinerama programme has been playing to packed houses in New York, and made a great impression. Numerous rumours are afoot as to the effect it is likely to have on film-making as a whole.

Gavin Lambert, editor of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, has recently been in New York, and is now preparing a special publication on Cinerama, to be issued during January, for the British Film Institute. It will include a personal account of a Cinerama programme, technical information, and a survey of likely developments in the future.

Work In Progress

Britain

Carol Reed: A story set in Berlin, scripted by American Harry Kurnitz; from contemporary German novel called *Susan and Berlin*, with James Mason and Claire Bloom.

Anthony Asquith: *The Final Test*, from the televised play by Rattigan, about a test match. With Jack Warner, Robert Morley, Brenda Bruce, and famous cricketers.

Anthony Pelissier: At Ealing, *Meet Mr. Lucifer*, from a play by Arnold Ridley about "a new race of people being bred by television."

Hollywood

Bette Davis as *The Star*, about a fading film star who returns to the studio at which she became famous, directed by Stuart Heisler and shot at Warner's.

A new producer, Huntington Hartford, presents *Face to Face*, comprising Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, with James Mason (director, Bretonne Windust), and Stephen Crane's *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* (director, John Brahm), scripted by James Agee, with Robert Preston, Marjorie Steele, James Agee.

Italy

De Sica: *Terminal Station*, English-speaking film produced by Selznick, with Montgomery Clift and Jennifer Jones, mainly shot in Rome's largest station. Original story by Zavattini, dialogue by Truman Capote.

France

Jean Renoir: A Tchekov story, about a romantic first love, with Danièle Delorme.

Americans in Britain

With M.G.M., Fox, Columbia and the Disney Studios all busy producing films in this country, and with Hollywood players turning up in an increasing number of pictures from the smaller British companies, American activity in British studios seems to be at its height. On the grand scale, there are the Lewis Milestone *Melba*, with the New York opera star Patrice Munsel (seen here in *The Consul*), in the title role, the John Huston film about Toulouse-Lautrec, *Moulin Rouge* (his next: *Beat the Devil*, with Humphrey Bogart), Gene Kelly's all-dancing experiment, *Invitation to the Dance*, Columbia's Commando story, *Red Beret*, with a British director, Terence Young, but starring Alan Ladd as a Canadian Commando, and the recently completed *The Sea Devil* (late *Toilers to the Sea*), taken from Victor Hugo, directed by Raoul Walsh and featuring Yvonne de Carlo and Rock Hudson. M.G.M. have made *Never Let Me Go*, an adventure story concerning the escape of Soviet war brides from Russia, starring Clark Gable; the director, the veteran Clarence Brown, is planning another British production, *A Bullet in the Ballet*, from the comic novel by Caryl Brahms and the late S. J. Simon. Moira Shearer is a possible star. Next year, following up on *Ivanhoe*, the company intend to make *Knights of the Round Table*; Robert Taylor has already been assigned as Sir Lancelot.

The Disney company, M.G.M.'s nearest rivals in British historical spectacle, are filming *The Sword and the Rose* (director Ken Annakin) with Richard Todd. Planned for next year is *Rob Roy*, also with Richard Todd. On location in Malta, Fox are making a film based on the C. S. Forester World War One novel *Brown on Resolution*; the director, Roy Boulting, is British; the players come from Hollywood (Jeffrey Hunter and Michael Rennie) and London (Wendy Hiller). After running through several titles—*Brown on Resolution*, *Able Seaman Brown* and *Sailor of the King*—the picture is currently known as *Singlehanded*. Further afield, in Kenya, is John Ford's safari picture, *Mogambo*, starring Clark Gable and Ava Gardner, which will be completed at Elstree.

Americans working for British companies include director Robert Parrish and actor Joel McCrea on *Roughshot*, from the Geoffrey Household chase story set in Dorset; Dennis O'Keefe and Coleen Gray in *The Fake*, publicised as the first picture to be shot (in part) in the Tate Gallery, and Cyril Endfield, who is directing a three-in-one thriller, *The Department of Queer Complaints*, featuring Boris Karloff. Exclusive, who have been bringing in American players for some time on a sort of lend-lease basis, have starred Barbara Payton in two films in quick succession, *The Flanagan Boy* and *Foursided Triangle*, and are currently at work on the first British science fiction story, *Spaceways*, with Howard Duff. All in all, while far from regretting this friendly occupation, one begins to wonder, occasionally, whether Hollywood may be in danger of becoming a ghost town.

Between Two Worlds in Claridge's

It began in Room 505. Gregory Peck was in London for a few days, and in honour of the premiere of Fox's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. He is not a Hemingway hero. You can't imagine him sitting down at a typewriter and producing: "*She had everything. On wheels. Everything.*" He even confessed that Hemingway heroes seemed rather remote to him; you knew roughly what they were like, the kind of life they led, the kind of situations they found themselves in, but somehow they never seemed, on the printed page, much closer than that.

He is, as you might guess, as good-looking and good-humoured, as tall and sympathetic, off the screen as on. He had just finished making a romantic comedy, *Roman Holiday*, for William Wyler, in Italy. For an actor, Wyler as director was "the best"; he would willingly rehearse and re-rehearse the same scene with him for months; he was highly impressed with his co-star, Audrey Hepburn; he enjoyed the element of improvisation in filming on location in Rome—crowds and extras recruited on the spot, which he felt would give the picture a special "spontaneous" flavour as well as the smooth finish associated with Wyler. He was impressed with Alekan, one of the three cameramen, and with his (comparative) youth. Somehow, he felt, "*Carnet de Bal* always seems as far away as *Birth of a Nation*. But he photographed it."

He broke off to reproach the climate, then at its worst, and somehow the conversation digressed to stars being mobbed at premières. Once, he remembered, some eager fan bit Barbara Stanwyck in the leg. "Whoever did that, did something." His next film? A thriller set in Stockholm, in which he plays an FBI man tracking

down spies smuggling out atomic secrets to Russia. "And don't think I won't track every one of 'em down." After that, he hopes to play in an adaptation of Scott Fitzgerald's story, *Babylon Revisited*, again for Wyler. At all events, he will stay in Europe (Paris) for some months.

Then a very expert lady interviewer arrived. Things got rather brisk. "Describe your Sundays," she commanded, perhaps a trifle peremptorily. Mr. Peck, genially, didn't think there was much to describe: sleeping late, reading the papers, lunch, friends coming round, a light supper . . . "What kind of light supper?" The subject was greedily pursued. "Oh, maybe a hamburger." "Really? Quite English!" The lady seemed satisfied.

Downstairs—a fact which intrigued Mr. Peck, though he stayed up—in the "third ballroom," Dr. Edith Sitwell was holding a press conference on the eve of her departure for Columbia Studios, Hollywood. Her historical biography *Fanfare for Elizabeth* had been bought by the studios, and they had assigned her to write the screenplay.

Flanked by a Columbia executive and publicity men, cameras flashing, the 65-year-old poetess commanded the sofa. She wore a dress of long and flowing black bombazine that reached to the floor, a Persian lamb coat, a superb head-dress designed by herself, hieratically embossed at the centre. ("This hat suits me. I shall wear it in Hollywood."). Her nails gleamed red, she supported a large and beautiful bangle on each wrist, and an immense topaz ring.

The famous face reminded one of Henry VII, of Elizabeth I, of one or two Flemish portraits in the National Gallery. Dr. Sitwell confessed herself vastly excited by her Hollywood contract. The cinema, she considered, was a most "revivifying" medium, though lately—"as I have been living in the country, just outside Sheffield"—she had seen few films. She listed *Caligari*, *Warning Shadows*, Garbo, Chaplin, *Gone with the Wind*, as favourites. Crime films had gone off. Asked who might play Elizabeth I in the film, and whether it might be the studio's No. 1 contract star, Rita Hayworth, she said she had not thought about it. "But there is no part for her." Pressed, she reminded everybody that the story would end when Elizabeth was three years old.

Would it be in colour? She passed the question on to the executive. "Yes, Doctor, I think we'll make it in Technicolor." The Doctor seemed pleased. "Really? How interesting!"

"I have," she proceeded, "a number of delightfully sinister ideas."



She turned to the executive. "You may, of course, find them too morbid. I hope not." She wanted the picture to open on the birth of Elizabeth, Henry VIII furious because she was not a boy; in a hospital, twelve leprous virgins were turned loose . . . Other scenes of terror were to follow. "And the lust of the era I shall manage beautifully." She turned again to the executive. "That is, if you'll let me." She was not frightened by any censors; she hoped she would be permitted to work in bed; and she looked forward to seeing the Aldous Huxleys and Stravinsky again.

So Europe was going to America, and America was staying in Europe. Upstairs, a symbol of Hollywood at its successful representative best; downstairs, a symbol of uncompromising European culture, now destined for Sunset Boulevard. For an hour or two they stayed under the same roof; but they didn't meet. A pity, for one would have liked to see them shake hands, and wish each other well.



FRENCH FILMS SINCE THE WAR

Jean Queval

Autant-Lara's overs: Gérard
Philippe and Micheline Presle in
"Le Diable au Corps."

Little has been written about the development of the French cinema since the end of the war. Its progress has in fact been much less clearly defined than that of Italian or American production. To set its achievements in perspective, we asked a French critic for his views on his country's film-making over the last seven years.

The French Critics' Association periodically holds a referendum for selecting films which can be regarded as worthy, if not necessarily successful, attempts at creative expression. The simple and sound idea behind it is obviously to establish a distinction between mere potboilers and works which may contribute to an ill-defined and evasive "seventh art". I have been through the lists compiled by the Association and, rather to my surprise, found no less than fifty-six titles mentioned between 1946 and 1951. But it cannot be said we have been too generous; I would personally include ten more titles, whose omission strikes me as strange, as against only one (Christian Jaque's *La Chartreuse de Parme*) which I would have left out.

Over sixty films in six years, then, with some kind of meaning or significance, mark an all-round improvement on the pre-war averages. I am not sure that this achievement has been equalled by the American, or the British, or the Italian cinema (whose reputation is built on a remarkably small number of works covering, with three or four exceptions, but one *genre*). This modest and useful way of looking at films as an art is commonly under-rated by critics and film societies; it does not, however, cover the whole picture. The French cinema has to be examined at a higher level if we are to reach a total estimation of real value. This has been done by

six French critics of some note. They have written a book shortly to be published under the title "Sept ans de cinéma français", and, anxious to come to some common conclusion, they have named the films which in their opinion can be judged excellent if not great. The critics are: Henri Agel, Jean-Pierre Barrot, André Bazin, Denis Marion, Jean-Louis Tallenay and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze. Their list of twenty-one films reads as follows: *Antoine et Antoinette* (Becker), *Bataille du Rail* (Clément), *Beauté du Diable* (Clair), *Belle et la Bête* (Cocteau), *Café du Cadran* (Gehret), *Espoir* (Malraux), *Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (Bresson), *Diable au Corps* (Autant-Lara), *Farrebique* (Rouquier), *Jéricho* (Calef), *Jour de Fête* (Tati), *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* (Bresson), *Manèges* (Yves Allegret), *Parents Terribles* (Cocteau), *Paris 1900* (Vedrès), *Pattes Blanches* (Grémillon), *Point du Jour* (Daquin), *Rendezvous de Juillet* (Becker), *Silence est d'Or* (Clair), *Silence de la Mer* (Melville), *Une Si Jolie petite Plage* (Yves Allegret). Shorts are not taken into account.

I am afraid this is a case of stretching the notion of excellence too far. Just as the previous list, an attempt at singling out films of some interest, with everybody joining in, was perhaps too much impregnated with aesthetic self-righteousness, so this roll of honour over-dignifies the "seventh art" with rather indiscriminate favours. No doubt

anybody making an attempt of this kind is liable to have his weaknesses duly exposed—but why not? It being now my turn to join this innocent game, I must only make clear that I am fully aware of the restrictions of the first person. The list that follows contains only twelve titles: twelve films—since 1946—of real quality, as opposed to sixty worth seeing for one reason or another, suggest that the French cinema has begun to level itself up, though it hasn't surpassed its top level. From an international point of view, there seems little doubt that the French cinema fares better with a long rather than a limited list, at least in comparison with its pre-war record.

II

To the twenty-one films selected by my colleagues, I add *Orphée* and *Casque d'Or*. (The latter, incidentally, was only released in mid-1952 and came too late for their consideration). While I think it legitimate that many people should dismiss *Orphée* as personally boring to them, it will nevertheless remain as a film of outstanding importance—if only because it is a poet's message conveyed directly and tellingly in cinematic terms. Some have praised it as Cocteau's last will and testament. But that in turn raises the whole question of Cocteau's status: of the various "periods" which, like Picasso, he went through: of the influence he exercised and the influences he submitted to: of the authenticity of his seemingly perennial childhood—and all this is outside the scope of the article. Let it be said for now that the greatness of *Orphée* springs from the very surprise felt at the film by many people prompted by a naive, didactic desire to understand precisely what cannot be understood. It is something that has never been approached on the screen (except, perhaps, in a different way, by the biblical Scandinavian school), unique because its style is visionary more than anything else.

Casque d'Or raises the more modest problem of how to place a *tour de force*. A period piece that comes alive, it is a fascinating and sensitive film, though marred, I think, by a forced melodramatic ending. Its episodes are shrewdly, grippingly, put together, and if unconvincing always superbly handled, ending included. But unconvincing they remain. Ill at ease with his superb whore and her environment of devoted apaches, Becker clearly had recourse to making heroes out of villains, thus going beyond the pseudo-psychoanalytical American "black" films that attempt to explain away all evil. In fact he caught up with the conventions of nineteenth century French romantic melodrama—which, indirectly, may well have provided the French cinema with its sole persisting tradition. Adroitly as Becker contrives his story, it still seems to contain four distinct episodes; it is difficult not to believe that a film more firmly centred on one of these would have gained in credibility and further enhanced, perhaps, its descriptive qualities. All the same, in listing *Casque d'Or*, I surrender to the pleasure that a fine stylist gave to a weather-beaten filmgoer.

Of the films I would omit from my colleagues' list, less need be said. Malraux's *Espoir* is a solitary, noble attempt at portraying some telling episodes of the Spanish civil war; beautiful though two sequences are, the rest of the film surely does not come off, and remains too sketchy. (The film was considered in the post-war period, by the way, because, although made in 1937, it was not released in France until nine years later). Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* seems to me pseudo—pseudo-what? others will ask, and I confess to being prejudiced. It does not seem to me to have the true elements of a fairy-tale, only imitative trappings. In *La Beauté du*



Becker's lovers: the postwar married couple of "*Antoine et Antoinette*," Claire Maffei and Roger Pigaut.

Diabla, René Clair has said; he was mainly interested in his work as a dramatist. He wanted to find a story-telling twist that would add to the meaning of the Faust myth, and perhaps our main quarrel with this distinguished author is that we prefer his real self to his argumentative one at odds with Goethe and Marlowe. As for Jean-Pierre Melville's attempt at filming Vercors' novel, *Le Silence de la Mer*, the soliloquy of a German officer billeted in a French household, it was an independent venture that needed sympathy when first released, but time has changed it into one of the worthiest failures there are.

So much for experiments and odd cases; I have also crossed out seven films of a less original character. All of them have undoubted merits, but none seems quite to have lived up to expectations. *Une si Jolie petite Plage*, which established the ambitions of the Jacques Sigurd-Yves Allegret team, is remarkable for its sheer pictorial description of a Normandy seaside resort. Its relative novelty made it appealing. On second thoughts (and the same is true of the previous, less interesting Sigurd-Allegret effort, *Dedée d'Anvers*) it helps to expose the tiredness of the romantic-melodramatic formula, and its episodes seem rather perfunctorily contrived. In this case, an admirable youth was corrupted by the sheer weight of society. With Jacques Becker, one might bring the reverse charge, until recently at least: that his social observation, though acute in many ways, is as a whole too slight. *Antoine et Antoinette* are a happily married young couple of working class stock, and nothing really happens to them, except in a fortunate, anecdotal way. It says much for this writer-director that he kept his thin, conventional little tale going at a swiftly sustained pace, and gave one the rare pleasure of being spellbound, of watching a story constantly projected forward; and he achieved this, to a great extent, by sheer virtue of editing. As for *Rendez-vous de Juillet*, the other Becker film I cross out, and which is dedicated to French post-war youth, it has weight, it is impressive in parts, but again the characters, keenly observed though they are, break



French documentary style. Left, Clément's "Bataille du Rail": hostages taken by German troops. Right, Rouquier's "Farrebique."

no ice. The ending sounds nearly like government propaganda (energetic young people parting with careerist girlfriends and jazz fans and setting off to explore Africa). This marred a film admirable in several ways: the bourgeois family lunch, some of the jazz fans' scenes, and others, came off pointedly, forcefully. I am afraid not so much can be said in favour of Louis Daquin's *Le Point du Jour*, in which a social fresco was intended to show History on the march (a Northern mining village during and after the war). The director's militant marxism need not trouble anyone, for I doubt whether a genuine liberal's view of the same community would have proved substantially different. But the exposition of the "problem" was made at the expense of individual characterisation; an interesting, even an intelligent attempt, but rather a dull film. Daquin has been out of work for some time, while hardly competent people are busy shooting vulgar things.

Henri Calef, though not ostracised by the trade, has not had the opportunity to tackle a subject worthy of his *Jéricho* (script by Charles Spaak). The starting-point of this film was a single R.A.F. bomber's attack on part of Amiens gaol, and the escape of a group of Resistance members held hostage there. It was not, however, concerned with the *fait d'armes*, though the film was dedicated to the R.A.F. crew (the plane was shot down); Calef was interested in what went on in the minds of the hostages, and this was forcefully described. Only a slightly stilted, slightly high-minded approach, and Brasseur's gesticulations, stood between this film and real distinction. Crossed out it is, most regretfully.

In contrast to both *Le Point du Jour* and *Jéricho*, Jean Gehret's *Café du Cadran* strikes one as remarkable for straightforward characterisation. A melodrama set in a Paris café, it is one of the rare genuinely "realistic" French films, and perhaps Parisians have a weakness for it. It owed much to the script by a popular journalist, Pierre Bénard, and Henri Decoin helped Gehret, whose first and best film it was, in the direction. Thin as it is, only bordering on the unconventional, I find it difficult to sustain great claims for it now. Finally, I cannot accept *Pattes Blanches* either. This uneasy, most uneven work was directed by Jean Grémillon after he had hastily rewritten a script by Jean Anouilh. A would-be tragedy, set in Brittany, it assumes at best an air of impressive unreality.

III

My list would be incomplete without the inclusion of Clair's *Les Belles de Nuit*, released two months ago in Paris, a typical, brilliant, recapitulatory work in which, unfortunately, fastidious care for stylisation has neatly killed off everything else.

The list, then, reads as follows:

Robert Bresson: *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*.

René Clair: *Le Silence est d'Or*, *Les Belles de Nuit*.

Jean Cocteau: *Orphée*, *Les Parents Terribles*.

Followed by, with one film each (and still in alphabetical order):

Yves Allegret: *Manèges*. Claude Autant-Lara: *Le Diable au Corps*. Jacques Becker: *Casque d'Or*. René Clément: *Bataille du Rail*. Georges Rouquier: *Farrebique*. Jacques Tati: *Jour de Fête*. Nicole Vedrès: *Paris 1900*.

IV

That Clair, Bresson and Cocteau stand out in this way is no accident, although it conveys an odd picture, strangely cut off from its background. Clair remains the obvious steady champion, by now incapable of going astray. His strength lies in being solidly individual, endowed with high gifts which owe remarkably little to other people (any comparison with Chaplin is superficial, since the latter's works spring from so much deeper sources). He is not akin to anyone else in the film world, and his spiritual colleagues are to be found amongst the French 18th century writers, as his own pleasant writings show. His parallel weakness is of turning a deaf ear to anything new. Tellingly enough, his only book on film-making, *Reflexion Faite*, published in 1951, is a dialogue with the Clair of 20 odd years ago. In a word, he is aloof, for good and bad. With all the affection one still feels for him, one has come to fear his next film more and more, with an unpleasant feeling that he is decidedly cut off and, one suspects, secretly suffering from an awareness of it.

The reverse, incidentally, is to be said of Jean Renoir, as anyone who has seen *The River* can testify. He is a man who improves enormously by drawing on a deeply felt sympathy for his present-day fellow beings. Alas, he has ceased to work in his native country since before the war.

Bresson and Cocteau, the former particularly, have in common with Clair that they are solitary artists, at least by comparison with other people of note. Perhaps this is one of the infrequent signs of the cinema coming of age? Bresson's own eminence, in both the films previously mentioned—and he has only three (the first being *Les Anges du Péché*, with a script by Giraudoux) to his credit so far—is due to the unique intimacy and intensity of character analysis in his films, which explore new ground. Hearing him dismiss *Limelight* as “non-cinematic” (he hastened to add it is full of qualities, the work of a genius, etc.), my first reaction was a shudder. Stupid people would say that *Limelight* is no film because there is little positive camera work in it. What Bresson means is, of course, the reverse. The cinema, he contends, is not a spectacle to be recorded by the camera. On second thoughts one understands rather better, from this unfortunate remark, what Bresson is aiming at, and the inescapable fact that creators of deep integrity must fail to appreciate the other man's approach.

As for Cocteau, outside the *Sang d'un Poète-Orphée* line, the transposed spiritual autobiography, the experiment is of a more formal, rhetorical character, and is concerned mainly with the cinematic translation of stage effects: that is to say, the reading on faces, the lines to be deciphered between the lines. Although this is far from negligible, and is used systematically with remarkable effect in *Les Parents Terribles*, there is nothing intrinsically new in the process. I wonder whether French film criticism—deadly dogmatic at its top level worst—has not made too much capital out of the mere fact that the play existed before the film. This is not, of

course, intended as a gibe against an admirably clever man and a true poet.

V

Before coming down to the second best, perhaps some conspicuously absent people should be mentioned. First, of course, Marcel Carné, whose pictorial genius nobody doubts, and to whom everybody wishes a grand comeback, now already long delayed. It seems that in trying to stand up to an exceptionally high reputation—*Le Jour se Lève*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, etc.—he has lacked the sympathies of Renoir and the author's approach and equipment of Clair. He made one bad film from a script by Prévert (*Les Portes de la Nuit*), and for that mistake I hold Prévert mainly responsible; whether or not it was the cause of the disruption of a partnership from which the Seventh Art has gained much, I do not know. The fact remains that Carné has not since made a film worthy of his own status. Bad luck explains it partly. But it is impossible to overlook the fact that Prévert has probably proved himself the best screenwriter ever, and that his influence on the contemporary French cinema has been greater than anyone else's. It is no mean trick to play on Carné—though he will undoubtedly believe it is—to say that Prévert's absence from the screen (he has remained silent since *Les Amants de Vérone*) is even more regrettable than his own misfortunes.

While Prévert, Carné and indeed, on other grounds, Renoir, have every right to head the list of the missing, one is slightly confused as to who should come next. Some, I suppose, would name Marcel l'Herbier, a Distinguished Old

“*Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*.” Lucienne Bogaert, Maria Casarès.





Leenhardt's "*Les Dernières Vacances*": family group. Jean d'Yd (left), Berthe Bovy as the grandmother (centre).

Hand, out of work for a few years and busy with congresses and T.V. assignments. With all allowances made, perhaps he is out of work because he is out of touch. On the other hand, it is difficult to abandon all hope of Marc Allegret making, at least and at last, something remarkable one way or another. His two best films—*Lac aux Dames* and *Entrée des artistes*—were made before the war, and the latter owes much to Henri Jeanson's dialogue and Jouvet's art. Allegret's *Gide*, though moving in parts, is as a whole pathetically trite and disappointing. Another man of repute who, though still working, has made no comeback, is Raymond Bernard, son of the poet Tristan Bernard, director of Max Linder comedies and some solid later works in the 20's and 30's; but then one wonders what one would think nowadays of *Le Miracle des Loups* and *Les Misérables*. As for Léon Poirier, a specialist in African heroics and the life of Father de Foucauld, he has disappeared. More regrettably, Abel Gance, who displayed prodigious if undisciplined gifts thirty years ago with *La Roue* and *Napoléon*, has for a long time looked in vain for producers to accommodate immense schemes (lives of Loyola, Columbus, Christ) and effectively disappeared also.

Sacha Guitry is at last disappearing. A typical writer-artist of the stage, he never believed in the cinema as an art but nevertheless had ideas for fitting the screen to his own personality. The process once proved becoming to both, in *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*. Born twenty years later, Guitry might have brought more life to the cinema than L'Herbier, Marc Allegret, Raymond Bernard and Poirier put together. As it is, he now shoots unspeakable films in a fortnight.

Marcel Pagnol—to return to life—is *par excellence* the playwright who has used the cinema with great shrewdness for irrelevant purposes, and eventually become a filmwright of note. He should be placed high on the list of the missing, and should not stay there long. He has recently completed a film called *Manon des sources* (a fable about a Provence village deprived of water), and published parts of the scenario. It is quite fresh and appealing. As André Bazin has neatly explained, Pagnol's importance springs from the fact that he arrived at doing the reverse of what he set out to do: not a theatrical performance on the screen, but neo-realism before the Italians. He is nonetheless vastly over-estimated in

Hollywood and Hampstead, for obvious reasons of exoticism. In other words, there is a danger of putting the Marseilles trilogy, *Marius*, *César*, *Fanny*—his canned stage period, with other people directing—on the same level as, say *Angèle*, *Regain*, or even *Jofroi*. So much for Pagnol: erratic, perhaps lazy, but certainly alive.

By way of contrast, Jean Grémillon—not a Provencal, a Norman: not a writer, an artist: not a man who has come to be quite interested in the cinema, but one who can't be interested in anything else. Pagnol is all wit, fluency, buoyancy; utterly vain at times, he will talk through his hat or else ridicule the critics in a malicious 18th century manner. An actor, he is shrewd and worldly. Grémillon has more gifts than accomplishments to his credit, possible more undisciplined gifts than any other French director; he even writes fine music; he does not compromise; while Pagnol is politically amoral, praising Pétain one year, de Gaulle the next, with the inner conviction that it is all a joke, Grémillon, who has staunch left-wing views, will challenge the censors. While the Southerner is bound for success, the Northerner is secretly in love with self-destruction. The parallel could be fruitfully pursued were private lives public. In fact, Grémillon is our great present-day loss. He says he is going to transpose Roger Martin du Gard's saga, *Les Thibault*, to the screen—an ambitious choice, if a bit odd. His best films, *Remorques*, *Lumière d'Été* (script by Prévert), *Le 6 juin à l'aube*, have shown strength and broad human sympathies; recently, he has worked on short films with Pierre Kast (*Les Charmes de l'Existence*, *Les Désastres de la Guerre*, after Goya) and made a little history of astrology.

We come now to some fairly obvious names, people of long-standing ability still steadily at work: Duvivier, Christian Jaque, Decoin, Delannoy. Jean Delannoy, a Protestant from the north, has artistic integrity and, in contrast to the others, no vulgarity whatsoever. I suppose all he lacks is vision. Recent films: *Le Garçon Sauvage*, *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes*, *La Minute de Vérité* (with Gabin and Morgan reunited—miracles, unfortunately, only happen once), all worthy. There is between Delannoy and Decoin, a very capable technician whose films are as interesting as their scripts, the same gap that exists between greatness and Delannoy. Duvivier has come closer to distinction than anyone else in this group. His is a most disconcerting career. But vulgarity has won the day—or so one feels after seeing a film like *Sous le Ciel de Paris*, filled with a mass of facile pictorial effects. Christian Jaque has retained his youthful spirit, and is a favourite of the trade; the geniality, if not the lightness and charm, of his earlier *Les Disparus de Saint-Agil*, shows through a film like *Fanfan la Tulipe*. He provides the nearest French approach to the western.

There remains Clouzot. His good films, to me, are *Quai des Orfèvres* and of course *Le Corbeau*—not *Manon*, a vulgar, pretentious, inconclusive affair. But it seems that *Manon* went to his head. After seeing *The Third Man* he made up his mind he could do no better in that line, and embarked hurriedly for Brazil, to shoot in the Flaherty manner (he had seen *Louisiana Story* at the same time). He came back with no film and wrote a book. For months now he has been shooting, on and off, the adaptation of a successful novel, *Le Salaire de la Peur*. Owing to rain and financial difficulties, it moved into something like the thirtieth week of shooting. Now finished, it is reported to run over two and a half hours. Cocteau once referred to Victor Hugo as a madman who mistook himself for Victor Hugo; it is tempting, though too facile, to sum up Clouzot as a madman who mistakes himself



Three leading directors. Left to right: Robert Bresson, René Clair directing "*Les Belles de Nuit*" (Gérard Philipe in background), and Jacques Becker.

for Orson Welles. He has shown a shrewd grasp of film narrative, an acute eye and, for good and bad, something not unlike a *voyeur's* outlook.

VI

As you see, the serious missing people—Renoir, Grémillon, Carné, Clouzot, Pagnol—only raise question marks. A confused situation, undoubtedly; but it has always been so, and the French are a muddling-through people. This difficult ground covered, we come back to the List. Next to Clair, Bresson and Cocteau there were, if you remember, Claude Autant-Lara, Jacques Becker, Yves Allegret, René Clément, Georges Rouquier, Nicole Vedrès, Jacques Tati. The last three are special cases. Nicole Vedrès is a slightly esoteric writer of distinguished fiction (*Le Labyrinthe de Sir Arthur*, a short poetic novel), and she brings an agreeable, unusual personality to the screen. She also brings a great deal more. *Paris 1900* opened up a fresh method of approach (the editing, by the way, was almost perfect, and the contribution of Alain Resnais, director of such short films as *Guernica*, *Van Gogh*), and conveyed a near-Proustian, melancholy feeling for the

past. The formula has been ill used since, and is probably dead for some time. Nicole Vedrès could only carry on a career as a film director along the usual lines. But can she *direct*? *La Vie Commence-Demain* raises doubts, at least as far as handling people and actors is concerned. Georges Rouquier is, if anybody is, the victim of the trade. His beautiful *Farrebique* has been followed only by some remarkable shorts. There is no exaggeration in saying that the complacent irresponsibility of French "producers" here makes for everybody's loss. Jacques Tati has completed another broad burlesque, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, which should prove worthy of *Jour de Fête*; though we will probably regret our first discovery of a strikingly original talent. I have, too, the feeling that Tati may leave France one of these days.

Jacques Becker, Claude Autant-Lara, René Clément and Yves Allegret are, at the moment, people who challenge the supremacy both of the old guard and of the epigones of a "literary" cinema—Bresson, Cocteau—exploring new ground. Others do it, though less consistently. Roger Leenhardt,

Some postwar players. Left to right: Serge Reggiani ("*Les Portes de la Nuit*," "*Les Amants de Vérone*," "*La Ronde*," "*Casque d'Or*"); Simone Signoret ("*Dedée d'Anvers*," "*Manèges*," "*La Ronde*," "*Casque d'Or*"); Daniel Gélin ("*Rendezvous de Juillet*," "*Edouard et Caroline*," "*La Ronde*," "*Le Plaisir*"); Danièle Delorme ("*Gigi*," "*L'In génue Libertine*," "*Souvenirs Perdus*," "*La Jeune Folle*").



formerly a critic, has been elevated by some to the level of a *petit maitre* on the strength of one feature film, *Les Dernières Vacances*. The film, which evokes a summer holiday spent in a French country house by a group of adolescents, has real charm and atmosphere, and the texture of a novel; but apart from it, Leenhardt has made only a few shorts, pleasant but not particularly distinguished. One suspects *Les Dernières Vacances*, obviously autobiographical, may have been the one film he had in him. Among others, Pierre Prévert (*Voyage Surprise*), Calef, and Jean Faurez (*L'Armoire Volante*), have attempted something original and worthwhile. Perhaps one should also mention Jean Paul Le Chanois, reasonably good in semi-documentary, high-minded stuff (*L'école buissonnière*): Gilles Grangier (*L'Amour, Madame*), too hearty and farcical so far, but who should prove very good if and when he discovers he has more sympathy for human beings than most of his colleagues; André Cayatte (*Justice est Faite, Nous Sommes tous des Assassins*), if he does not go on mistaking the screen for the bar too long—though, even so, I wonder; and Georges Lampin (*L'Idiot*).

A number of other one-film people are, like Leenhardt, unpredictable. It is a long time since Georges Lacombe made *Jeunesse* (18 years, to be exact), and quite a while since Jean Devaivre's *La Dame d'Onze Heures* and Dréville's *Copie-Conforme* (known as *Monsieur Alibi* in England). More, perhaps, is to be expected from Claude Vermorel, who wrote and directed an intelligent African story, *Les Conquistadors Solitaires*, and has just left for Guinea with a rather better script. On the other hand, an attractive film by the writer René Wheeler, *Les Premières Armes*, met with no success. An Italian born in London of a French mother, Marcello Pagliero has just about all the gifts, I believe, but lacks creative personality. His first film, a little fantastic comedy made in Italy with de Sica and Valentina Cortese, *La Nuit Porte Conseil*, had a quite unique freshness and charm. *Un Homme Marche dans la Ville*, a low-life study set in Le Havre, was impressively grim and detailed, yet somehow quite remote. Pagliero now takes his advice, not from Bohemian night-life, but from Jean-Paul Sartre. Max Ophuls is, so to speak, a guest star; *La Ronde* and *Le Plaisir* are beautifully made, slight and intelligent films. One has been rather over-rated, the other rather under-rated. Ophuls has a distinctive, cosmopolitan touch.

Yves Allegret has integrity, polish, even style; partly—only partly—under the influence of his script writer Jacques Sigurd, he has landed in the pitfalls of social melodrama—"pure" lovers, abominable society. He often has good things

to say, but tends to say them according to a set formula. The same set formula is at times a weakness of René Clément; again, in *Jeux Interdits*, we have "pure" children, while the parents are again abominable—in fact, peasants grossly distorted in the silliest way. Parts of the film are remarkably well done, but in general one feels like saying: "enough, no more." Otherwise Clément is an efficiently versatile man, capable of first class sequences of reconstructed documentary; of showing another Paris and nearly another, more moving, adult Michèle Morgan in *Le Château de Verre*; of almost giving depth to a thriller set in a U-boat, *Les Maudits*; of making a post-Carné film, *Au-Delà des Grilles*. To quote Cocteau again, he has style rather than a style. One wonders who he is. He can show strength, and lose himself in weak aestheticism. He once expounded the theory that vertical lines mean tragedy and horizontal lines comedy.

The reputation of Autant-Lara, though no longer a very young man—he began as set-director for l'Herbier—has steadily risen in recent years, not only due to *Le Diable au Corps*. He knows how to amuse on the second level, making a parody of vaudeville (*Occupe-toi d'Amélie*) or of melodrama (*L'Auberge Rouge*), subtle entertainments which come off more or less, depending on individual taste to an exceptional degree.

But I believe our most rewarding film-maker to be Jacques Becker. Many people in the French cinema insist that the set-up of things is wrong; it is, but there is nothing particularly unique about that. Others are self-consciously in search of Beauty (like Carné with *Juliette ou la Clé des Songes*). Becker belongs to neither group. His main gift is simply an eye for people—a gift oddly rare in the cinema. So he catches types and proceeds to portray individual people. And how refreshingly well he does it; we learn about their jobs, and the social background is there too, not in terms of impersonal dialogue but of numerous odd encounters between genuine, real people. Perhaps he lacks something in breadth and vision, but Becker seems to overcome his limitations smoothly, one by one, without withholding his sympathy for his material and his characters.

In my little Norman village there is a retired sailor, the comic drunkard of the place. He has a kind word for everybody, is laughed at by children and enjoys it. He walks unconcerned under pouring rain, being sorry for holiday-makers who have to stay at home. He too, has an eye for people, and sympathy for other odd human beings. His name is Baptiste. I sometimes think of Jacques Becker as a kind of Baptiste turned sober.

The Seventh Art

"If you were to X-ray every Oscar you'd find every one of them had an ulcer inside."—Producer Sam Katzman, quoted in *Time*.

*

"Most of these young glamour boys in films today used to work in garages. If you go into one of the major studios and shout 'Fill her up' all the young stars come running."—Humphrey Bogart, quoted in the *Daily Express*.

*

An ironic situation arises over a forthcoming British film, *The Yellow Balloon*. Because it has been given an "X" certificate one of its stars, young Andrew Ray, will be unable to see it.—*The Sunday Pictorial*.

*

The Immortal Enrico Caruso and his screen prototype, Mario Lanza.—Picture caption in M.G.M. publicity material.

ATTENTION FILM STUDIOS. A new personality, good line shooter, ex-R.A.F. type, no moustache. What offers!—*The Times*, Personal Column.

*

Kansas Territory.—On some of these Wild Bill pictures they get started with the picture and before you know it the picture is over. Some of our patrons mentioned that before they could really get seated the picture was over, because it was so short.—Showman's report in "What the Picture Did for Me", *Motion Picture Herald*.

*

What about the unlikely meeting of *Spring in Park Lane* Wilcox and *Hamlet* Olivier? "Well", says Wilcox, "Larry is a low-brow and I'm a high-brow, so we get along fine."—*Daily Express* report on *The Beggars Opera*.

The National Film Theatre begins the New Year with a series of programmes dedicated to the great clowns of American silent comedy. Chaplin, Keaton, Langdon, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, are the brightest lights of this golden age of comedy, a short review of which is presented here.



Scene from an early Sennett comedy, with Polly Moran and Ben Turpin (centre).



The Bathing Belles, led by Phyllis Haver (centre).

Here Came The Clowns

The cinema's first complete comedy world was created by a young, prematurely grey Canadian, Mack Sennett. Some individual comics—Durand, Linder, John Bunny, Sydney Drew—had already established themselves, but the technique of their films was drawn from the theatre and the music-hall. The Keystone period, launched in 1912 with a frolicsome two-reeler set on Coney Island, dispensed with all previous conventions.

Not only were space and time thrown overboard, but all human laws. These comedies have the wild destructiveness and fascination with the grotesque that typify so much American humour; and, with the additional resources of uninhibited movement and action before our eyes, all conceivable pandemonium breaks loose. The Sennett world is a freaks' playground—menacing fatties, cross-eyed cretins, disconsolate thin men with beards and enormous outraged matrons, demonic children; *Bathing Belles* giggle and lollop, *Keystone Cops* try quite vainly to create order; custard pies are hurled, mallet blows ferociously exchanged; motor cyclists ride along the telegraph wires and trains swerve down the street; there are endless car chases, acrobatic pursuits, gun battles, drunken scenes and almost every known form of public nuisance. But nobody dies and nobody—not even after falling from a tenth-floor window—gets hurt.

"Barney Oldfield's Race for Life." Mabel Normand gagged and bound by thugs, notably Mack Sennett himself (right).





Chaplin in one of his Sennett-style comedies, "The Cure," with Mack Swain (left).

The action is violent, the tempo breakneck, the narrative often hard to follow, but in two-reeler after two-reeler these unforgettable zanies—Chester Conklin, Ben Turpin, Mack Swain, Ford Sterling, Fatty Arbuckle, Mabel Normand, Louise Fazenda—cavort, gesticulate, pursue each other and give battle. It is surrealism without tears, a world which defies everything, itself included, to make sense.

Apart from this, most of the raw material—gags, types, settings, contraptions—is here; and to this beginning most of the great American clowns can be traced. Chaplin began here and, when the Tramp emerged, other innocents—Keaton, Langdon, Charles Ray—came too. The destructive absurdity of Laurel and Hardy, the gag progressions of Lloyd, equally owe their inspiration to it. The clowns humanised this world.

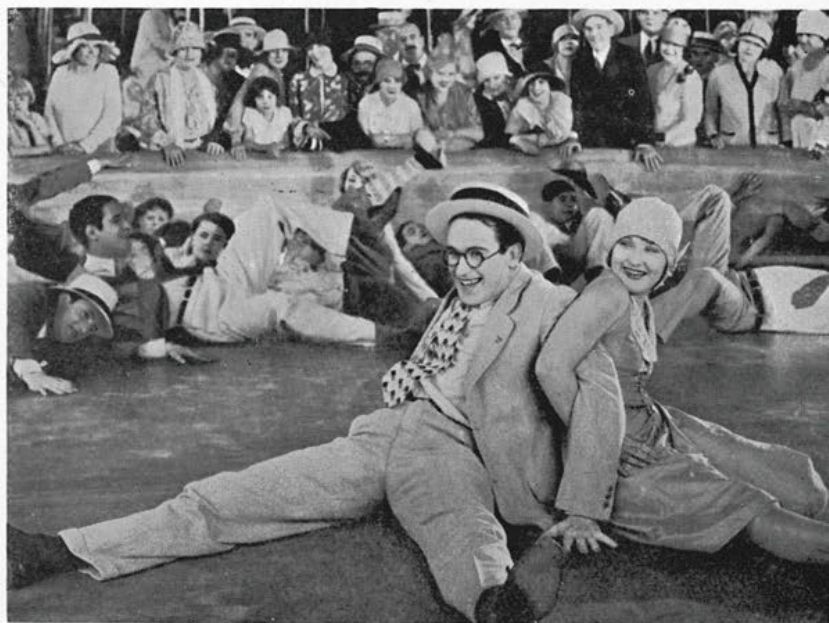
Chaplin, the first and perhaps the last of the great screen clowns, entered films through the Keystone world. His first appearances were rather dandified and caddish—influenced, maybe, by the aristocratic style of Max Linder, whom he greatly admired; and many of his earlier films are full of Sennett-like grotesques and crammed with slapstick. *The Cure*, *The Champion*, *The Rink*, even *Easy Street*, bring back memories of the old zanies. Then, finding himself, he also found us, touched off innumerable common chords of joy, melancholy, delight, disappointment, and developed a lyrical

Laurel and Hardy in "Blockheads."



quality which no other comedian—in living memory, at least—has equalled. From *The Vagabond* and *Sunnyside* it grew into the intense poetry of *The Kid*, *The Gold Rush*, *City Lights*. This clown has declared sympathies, his friends are waifs and strays and the dispossessed. Wearing "adversity like a bouquet", he took more of the world upon his shoulders than the others did, and perhaps this explains why, unlike them, he has survived and made use of the talkies. The best of Keaton, of Langdon, of Lloyd and Laurel and Hardy, remains enclosed in a sublime dumb-show; outside words, they are also outside real confession; but Chaplin, literally and metaphorically, has something to say.

Buster Keaton is essentially the comedian of order, of logic; aloof, deadpan, isolated in his contests with the implacable machine—a runaway train, a drifting liner—he operates with a calm assurance that his inadequate resources will eventually tame the monster. Fitting his broken sword together time and again in *The General*, meticulously washing his hands under water in *The Navigator*, struggling doggedly with a piano in *Limelight*, he will never admit that circum-



Harold Lloyd in "Speedy."

stances have got the better of him. There is little of the pure clown in Keaton, so that a five or ten minute extract from his work scarcely seems funny; his mastery lies in the sustained line of comedy, the development less of a character than of an almost anonymous attitude. Keaton is the most detached of actors. He ignores the audience; other players often seem reduced to the status of so many more inanimate objects; speech, implying (or risking) communication, would destroy his lonely detachment. Behind the locked, melancholy face one senses the mind of a mathematician for whom a succession of gags has the inevitability of an equation—to which, perhaps, only Keaton, the least imitated, the most solitary of the great comedians, knows the answer.

Harry Langdon liked to call himself the "Christian innocent"; innocent as are all the great pathetic comedians, having a skin less than ordinary people, and a sense missing, so that the most everyday happenings lead them into a series of impossible misadventures; and Christian because Langdon conveys a simple, unshakeable faith, a readiness to believe the best of people. He is the most trusting of comedians

and, indeed, providence was always his strongest ally. With sad eyes set in the doughy moon-face, like pieces of coal stuck in a snowman's head, he surveys the world from a child's viewpoint; everyone is rather bigger than he is; everything is just beyond his reach. In his two best films, *Long Pants* and *The Strong Man* (both directed by Frank Capra, who most successfully exploited Langdon's qualities), there are long and brilliantly sustained passages of pure clowning—the scene with the dummy in one, the adventure with a wicked blonde in the other. But the territory Langdon made his own is that borderline where comedy touches pathos, where absurdity becomes loneliness, and the hero has always a little of Quixote in his make-up.

The odd thing about Laurel and Hardy is how they love each other. On the surface, there is absolutely no reason for it at all. Huge Hardy is short-tempered, pernickety, busybodying, extremely obstinate and unashamedly vulgar in his reactions; little Laurel is timid, patient, vague, crushed, and endearingly discreet. When they are together they quarrel most of the time, Hardy is invariably reproaching his companion and sulking like a monstrous overgrown



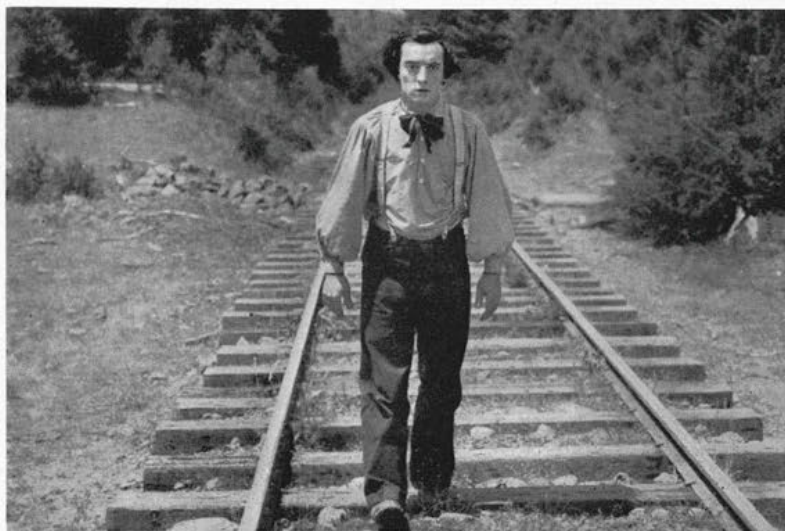
Charlie in "The Immigrant."

because although gullible and simple-minded, his aims are worldly. Behind the owlish spectacles, the gangling walk, the slightly indignant acrobatics, there is not the same depth as in the pathetic clowns; instead, he radiates small-town American optimism. Harold Lloyd is glad to be alive, whereas Keaton and Langdon are quite astonished to be, and Chaplin finds there is much to be sad about. The shadows of introspection never cross this genial comic's path. Rash enough to climb a skyscraper to win a bet, he moves from hairbreadth escape to hairbreadth escape with a kind of indomitable fatuousness. The world has to be coped with on its own terms, and this is one of them.

Offered a chance to speak, the clowns were clearly doubtful about this trick to make them confide their secrets. Some of them tried a few sentences, but seemed baffled by the irrelevant considerations of dialogue; they gave up, except for Laurel and Hardy, who battled on, apparently trying to destroy words as they had liquidated objects. Only Chaplin eventually threw off the clown's mask, and emerged dramatically articulate. A new comedy came, and W. C. Fields, the Marx Brothers, Bob Hope, Danny Kaye, exploiting the wisecrack, the pun, the doubletalk, seemed to move into the same room with the audience, stripping away all formality and riddle—something to which Keaton and Langdon could never have agreed.

The rest, in fact, is sound.

Buster Keaton in "The General."



baby unless his slightest whim is instantly deferred to—and then they are suddenly as one in an intense, mystic orgy of destruction. This taste for unbridled violence, perhaps most memorable in *Big Business*—when, tired of hawking Christmas trees to householders, they suddenly attack a house itself, not indiscriminately but with transfixed method, sportsmanship and calculation—shows that they are, at bottom, nihilists. While they break the world around them into pieces they discover a deep comradeship, and memories of those glorious smash-ups make the ordinary hours of bickering and misadventure tolerable.

Later years tamed them. Hardy expostulates, Laurel bungles, but they no longer make it up in the old disturbing, ritual way; and it is not the same at all.

Harold Lloyd personifies the simple, plain, determined American youth; by a combination of obstinacy and luck he brings a semblance of order into the Sennett world and achieves what it so constantly used to deride, success and love. His gags, intricately and sometimes dazzlingly assembled, are not pure. He is gagging to win. He is not an innocent,

The Film Folio—2

Over the past forty years, many notable writers have in books and magazines contributed occasional pieces on the cinema. Some of these now seem dated and off the point; others maintain a surprising aptness and vitality.

Our first reprint in this series was an article written in 1914 by Bernard Shaw; our second is by Alistair Cooke, one of the most brilliant journalists of today, who was for some years during the 'thirties a practising film critic. He also edited what is still the best collection of film criticism: "*Garbo and the Night Watchmen*."

This article appeared in "*The Listener*" of October 17th, 1934 and is reprinted by permission of the B.B.C. Publications Department and of Mr. Cooke.

A CRITIC'S TESTAMENT



Alistair
Cooke

I declare that I am a critic trying to interest a lot of people into seeing, a few ambitious people into making, interesting films. I have no personal interest in any company. As a critic I am without politics and without class. I swear I am committed to no country, no director, no star, no theme, no style. For a film hero I am prepared to take John Barrymore, George Robey, a Battleship, Mickey Mouse, or an Italian Straw Hat. I hope that everyone who wants to make a lot of money in films will make it, that every girl who aches to become a star overnight will become one. I hope a little more fervently that any man or woman who can make an interesting film will somehow, somewhere, be allowed to make it. My malice extends only to those who have a dull talent and continue to exploit it, whether they live in London, Hollywood, Moscow, the African jungle, or behind the sets of a musical comedy. All hail, therefore, Amkino, Fox, Gainsborough, Gaumont-British, Paramount, R.K.O., Ufa, and Universal. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, long may your lion roar. Greetings of equal warmth to the Hollywood Academy of Motion Picture Directors, the London Film Society, the Edinburgh Film Guild, the Merseyside Workers Society, and all users of 8 mm. home movies. For Victor Fleming, Alexander Korda, Pabst, Eisenstein and Eddie Cantor . . . a sincere cheer. These are my respects. And now I hope I may not be misunderstood when in the future I find fault with the works of any of these institutions.

A month or two ago I had an earnest letter asking me rather gravely what I was going to do about politics. Like most other people I am just now much more anxious to know what in the next few years politics is going to do about me. Happily, I can only repeat that as a critic I can have no politics. But my correspondent was not beside the point. He went on to say . . . "What, for instance, will be your attitude to war films?"

Well, it would be very coy of me to talk about photography, about cutting, about technical details of acting and at the

same time profess a vast, naive ignorance of the forces that more and more will make or destroy our lives. I know, for example, that very many of you sincerely believe that wars, however hideous, are still the most straightforward way of settling international quarrels. And I also know that very many of you find it daily harder to believe that wars are conducted by disinterested parties for noble reasons. I don't see how you can contrive to squeeze in a compromise between these two honest attitudes. And it certainly isn't my business to try. But however weak or however decisive your opinions may be, usually they are formed in a more random way than most of us would care to confess. On this topic, for example, a firm militarist may be made by some personal experience of physical heroism, by a cartoon in *Punch*, by a politician's remembered speech. And for all I know Mr. Archibald MacLeish's recent article in the American magazine *Fortune* on the sale of armaments may have a profound influence on European politics, may, in fact, save several million necks. And nowadays, much more than newspapers, much more than books, the most popular, and I believe by far the most powerful, opinion machine, is the cinema. The story film is a machine which manufactures for us attitudes, sentimentalities, disguises, through which we can hope to escape the real difficulties of our private lives. And no effort of the imagination could create more vivid ready-made opinions about international affairs than the news-reel. Because it is a visual thing. You see a photograph and you are tricked into thinking you have seen some part of the actual facts. But it is only a fact some hectic camera-man has selected. And sometimes the false selection of incident is not the conscious work of any man: it may be in the angle at which his camera was tilted. A scene of a riot, or an accident, or a parliamentary session abroad can, of course, very sharply puncture a legend. But it can also inflate one. It would be nice to know just how fearful a bogeyman Napoleon would have seemed to the inhabitants of the south coast of England if they could have seen him in the news-reels.

And even in the story-film itself, the feature picture that seems so guilelessly, so comfortably far away from these grim realities, there is constantly an implication it is impossible to overlook. I mean a political, a social one. A film directed by, say, Lubitsch, is a film created by the society in which he lives. And those who saw a single film of his before he went to Hollywood will not need to search very far to discover where Mr. Lubitsch learned to represent that very ritzy sort of poverty in which Miriam Hopkins and Gary Cooper basked in *Design for Living*.

And yet, however much I might want in private to rage or protest or moralise, these actions have nothing to do with criticism. As a moralist I could be shocked. As an educationist I might lament that the subject was not elevating. As a business man I might feel glum that the seduction was clumsy and therefore bad box-office. But I am not a moralist, an educator, a business man. I am merely a critic and I have to try and decide whether Miss Harlow's smiles and pouts were performed expertly enough to entice Mr. Gable away, and whether in deserting his Texas farm for Miss Harlow he was being wicked, obvious, tactful, or just plain cynical. So if a film comes from Elstree and is full of

propaganda for, let's say, social slavery, it is not for me to say that such propaganda is shocking. It is simply my job to try and describe how tellingly the propaganda has been done. And similarly, if a film from Russia teems with propaganda for Communism, it is entirely impertinent for me as a critic to say whether Communism is a good or a bad thing. I have to say if the story, the direction, the acting, are likely to move you to believe for the time being in the propaganda. If they don't, the film is trivial. If they do, it's probably a good film. And there goes one of two words I have been trying all along to avoid using: the words 'good' and 'bad'. Which brings us to the question of praise and abuse.

To say 'this is a better film than that' is practically a useless remark. It's a roundabout way of saying, 'You listen to me—I'll tell you what's what'. And critics are a roguish race who have developed with considerable cunning ways of telling you just that. When you see on the cover of a book, 'A remarkable book . . . magnificent in its delicacy, its sweep, its power . . .' and similar quotations, you know that the man who said that didn't have time to think. Otherwise he would have been able to tell you *why* it was remarkable, and not just behave as we all did *creditably* at the age of twelve and leave the poor book with an elaborate tick in the margin, which merely says, 'I approve; others do likewise'. In short, a critic should defend and explain his *opinion*, not *himself*. Yet to do this, I suppose he had better know himself very well indeed, say about half as well as his friends know him. I think he will then decide—and at first it's an awful shock—that his job has actually very little to do with liking and disliking. As I see it, a critic is firstly a person who sees differences where other persons are liable to see only similarities. He has to distinguish things that look the same. And there is perhaps only one occasion when he should heartily condemn. That is when he strongly dislikes a film, thinks he knows good reasons why, and is sure that the film is likely to set a fashion in dullness.

You will want to know how this works out in practice. Well, take a film I like and one I dislike. The film I like is of a certain type—a murder mystery. It is called *The Thin Man*. But it is for once so much better than its type that it becomes a remarkable film. The film I dislike (which is called *The Fountain*) is a type I much prefer to murder mysteries, but this example of the romantic film is very much worse than its type and in one thing—its dialogue—sets a new fashion in pretentiousness. I believe that it is my duty to you to review at greater length *The Fountain* than *The Thin Man* because most of you will see *The Thin Man*, will see a murder film fairly rattling with detectives and thugs made into a gay, neat comedy. But *The Fountain* may be copied and imitated and a new fashion in boredom may catch you unawares. The pretentiousness lies in its slow, bemused stretches of dialogue. It is the sort of film in which the feelings of the characters, especially of the man and the girl, are represented as being so noble, so fine, that it seems to hurt the author to reduce them to the vulgarity of mere words and when he does get them down and you hear two people in love, you look around the theatre and wonder if any of these ordinary nice people like you and me have ever aspired to this lofty highbrow business of being in love.

So for these reasons I shall talk mainly about films I *like*, about scenes I like, about bits of acting, story, and direction I like. Because I think you bore people less by talking about things you like. A film you like, as also a person, may become, if you will make the effort, something you understand. Unfortunately abuse is much more attractive, much more dramatic, than praise. And many critics anxious to cut a figure in this world like to have lots of things around to dislike. I plead guilty to this failing and though I promise to abuse nothing—sometimes my temper is liable to get the better of me.

But on the whole I shall try and keep religiously to a

sentence I am just writing on the table with my thumb. This is it . . . *I mean what I say*. Please don't try to seek implications. Don't say 'Well, of course, he's soft-peddalling there . . . he really means he hates her'.

After these rather solemn promises I come to the most ticklish part of this critic's testament, I mean my confessional, the personal whims, prejudices you'll have to keep an eye on. There is only one major one. And because it is common to all critics and I dare say to all men and women, I mention it here. And also because I have never seen any critic confess to it. It is a particular warning about the criticism of actresses. There are lots of reasons why I should like an actress. But if not the chief one, I'm sure the first one is—because she's a woman. This is something outside the control of criticism, education, intellect, what you will. I will in the future give you very plausible, very responsible reasons why Miss Nastasia Vine's performance was, just a little, off. The real reason will be, probably, that her features, her colouring, her eyes, aren't the sort I like.

Two or three years ago the world could be divided into two classes, those who liked Greta Garbo and hated Marlene Dietrich, and those who liked Marlene Dietrich and hated Greta Garbo. There were numerous variations and subdivisions, as of people who thought a lot about Greta Garbo and didn't think at all about Marlene Dietrich. But this was the issue. Then in another year Miss Dietrich was for the time overshadowed and the choice was between Katharine Hepburn and Garbo. And this will always go on.

I hear some of you say that a critic should be above such sensual competition. But even a critic has a heart. Or had one before he became one. And though I solemnly swear to take no new lights of love, I can't abruptly get rid of all my old flames. Their impression is there, even if I've done with them. I believe it my duty to tell you, for instance, that until very recently I was in love with Loretta Young. Now, please . . . there's no point in snorting, or saying 'Tut-tut', or even, I'm sorry to say, in applauding loudly. It just happens that my peculiar chemistry and Miss Young's peculiar chemistry seem to click, I hope. And I shall probably be abominably unfair to the rest of the cast in her pictures. Another way you can tell my personal feelings about an actress, and so learn to ignore them, is when I'm specially catty about her. This will almost certainly mean she *was* a flame but now I feel for her only that slight contempt, that abominable faint pity one triumphantly feels for people one did love but now loves no more.

And now, having said all this, I'm going to ask you not to hold any of it against me. I have tried to put before you the severe limitations of a film critic, and to say (for my own guidance as well as for your reassurance) what he should *not* pretend to be. You may feel, therefore, that I'm going to behave very nicely and nobody is ever going to be outraged. But of course, they are bound to be. And it may often be my fault. Only I take no responsibility if, when I say that Miss Hepburn's hair was a little untidy in these scenes, I should the next day receive a cabled suit for slander from the Master Barbers' Association of Southern California. Because it's humanly impossible to work out a plan of dealing with a million or two men and women and then to live precisely up to it. If I could always keep to my purpose, if I could always know exactly when I wasn't just praising, or abusing, or airing a prejudice, I should be . . . well . . . I should be Shakespeare or Goethe. On the contrary, being me, I can only ring a bell or, better, have someone in the studio blow a whistle, every time a prejudice comes along that I know I have.

As for all the unconscious prejudices, confusions, all the times when I'm not sure whether I'm feeling like myself or more like somebody I'd like to think I was, or like someone I admired felt—these you'll have to put up with. But please *pity* your new teacher and remember they are much more of a burden to him than they'll ever be to you.



Lord and Lady Ennui (Maxine Audley and Derek Hart). Lady Ennui: "How ghastly!" (referring to herself).

The Pleasure Garden



James Broughton and one of the players, Diana Maddox, on location.

In July 1951 James Broughton and Kermit Sheets arrived in England with no immediate prospects but with four 16 mm. films. Since that time, *Loony Tom*, *Four in the Afternoon*, *Mother's Day* and *Adventures of Jimmy* have had many and successful private showings. In 1953 their prospects—as with most truly independent film-makers—are scarcely more immediate, but they have a 35 mm. film behind them. This is *The Pleasure Garden*.

Financed by private subscription, *The Pleasure Garden* was shot against the decrepit magnificence—flyblown statuary, anonymous urns, spreading undergrowth, foxglove patches, forlorn vistas—of

the Crystal Palace gardens, presided over by the platformed bust, immensely larger than life, of Paxton. It is a fantasy, with music, about how an eccentric though genial goddess called Mrs. Albion (Hattie Jacques) brings happiness to inhabitants and wanderers of the gardens, in the face of stiff opposition from local bureaucracy.

James Broughton wrote and directed; Kermit Sheets assisted; music and songs are by Stanley Bate; and these photographs were taken by Lindsay Anderson, who was also in charge of production and played a part.



Mrs. Albion (Hattie Jacques): "Cuckoo!" Gladys Spencer as Mrs. Jennybelle, a bird-watching widow.

Miss Kellerman, a nervous girl (Jill Bennett), Miss Wheeling, a cyclist (Hilary Mackendrick), and Sam Skipalong, a cowboy (Kermit Sheets).

STANISLAVSKY'S SYSTEM IN THE CINEMA

V. Pudovkin

Pudovkin as actor (right), in
"The Living Corpse," Fedor
Ozep's version of the Tolstoi
novel, Germany, 1928.



In this article the famous Soviet director, whose best films—"Mother", "Storm Over Asia", "Deserter"—are distinguished among other things for their remarkable intensity of playing, discusses Stanislavsky's methods as they affected the cinema in general and his own work in particular. Pudovkin, of course, had been an actor as well as a director, notably in Ozep's "The Living Corpse" and Eisenstein's "Ivan the Terrible".

Translated by T. Shebunina, this article has been slightly abridged and reprinted by permission of the Anglo-Soviet Journal, organ of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR.

Stanislavsky's aim was to create a realistic theatre. All his artistic conceptions, the whole of his intuition, were applied to breaking away from the hackneyed theatrical technique and to finding such lines for the actor's work as would always make the theatre a vivid reflection of real life. To attain this, Stanislavsky began by applying the full power of his creative analysis to a careful study of the basic principles for an artist's work on his part, and on himself, in the process of creating a stage character.

Though before Stanislavsky's time others had tackled similar problems, the majority had been content either to depict personal emotions or to formulate general principles of a poetic rather than scientific character. Stanislavsky never rejected what had been done before his time, but he succeeded in showing that the achievements of exceptionally gifted individuals were merely isolated victories of outstanding talent, and not the result of a proper training of the artists. Stanislavsky's great merit lies in the fact that the results of his theatrical analysis, scrupulously verified by experiment, have produced a number of objective principles which can serve every actor and every producer as a basis for methodical and fruitful work, irrespective of their individual temperament or talent. By collecting and analysing examples of outstanding acting, Stanislavsky sought to reveal the essence and the causes of individual success, and thus discover objective rules suitable for a systematic training of actors in general.

The cinema, which is closely linked both with theatrical art and with literature and the graphic arts, has naturally adopted the basic principles of Stanislavsky's school and continues to develop them successfully.

Although Stanislavsky did not directly concern himself with the cinema, in his theatrical work he had to face a number of problems to which the art of the cinema alone could offer a complete solution. In his book *My Life in Art*,

Stanislavsky gives the story of the premiere of the play *The Loss of the Hope* in Studio I of the Arts Theatre. The play was staged and acted in a hall so small that the audience was close up to the actors. Owing to this closeness of the public and cast, all exaggeration of gesture and intonation had to go and every half-tone and subtle nuance acquired extreme importance. The unusually intimate association between actor and spectator produced a feeling of particular sincerity and directness, giving the actors the opportunity of behaving as in real life. The lifelike quality of this performance impressed Stanislavsky; it revealed to him new possibilities of altering existing theatrical forms and transforming the stage performance into a more direct reflection of real life.

He wanted to carry this Studio I experience on to the big stage of the Arts Theatre, but this proved unexpectedly impossible, for the studio performance, created in a small hall, literally could be neither seen nor heard in one built to hold hundreds of spectators, and the charm of the intimate association between cast and audience vanished in a hall that demanded emphasis of voice and gesture. This experience showed Stanislavsky the limits beyond which reproduction of real life in a mass theatrical spectacle could not go. He decided to seek ways of completely fusing the actor's realistic behaviour on the stage with the emphasis inevitable in theatrical expression. He did not know, of course, that everything that had been discovered during the intimate performance at Studio I, though impracticable on a large stage, was perfectly possible to the new cinematic art, which both brings the actor close to the spectator and yet broadens out the hall to the ends of the earth.

Stanislavsky's endeavour to bring the actor's art as close as possible to a truthful and delicate rendering of human experience was more than once brought up short by the limitations of the stage. He tells how once he tried to introduce a

long pause full of complex inner life. He sat for a long time on a bench set close to the footlights and went through a series of thoughts and emotions, but it was all lost on the audience because of the distance between. In close-up, however, the public would have been able to follow on the screen all the fine plays of eyes and features and thus take in everything Stanislavsky wished to impart.

Stanislavsky's attempts to create scenery and surroundings as close as possible to reality were often criticised as an unnecessary introduction of superfluous realism on to the stage. This reproach is quite ill-founded. Great artist that he was, Stanislavsky sought to give a consistent unity to the life of the characters by means of the reality surrounding them, though he realised the limits set by the technical possibilities of the stage. In his reminiscences he tells how, when he was in the Crimea with his company, one day in a park he came upon a spot very similar to the setting of a scene in *Month in the Country*. He and Olga Knipper were moved to try out their scene in this natural setting, but after the first few sentences they gave it up. The conventional acting elaborated on the stage was in too great contradiction to the natural surroundings for these sensitive artists to go on with their scene. The acting of a screen actor, however, approximating as closely as possible to normal human behaviour, can merge completely with a natural landscape faithfully reproduced on the screen.

The cinema provided the realistic actor with many new opportunities of giving a direct reflection of life, and it became the highway to the development of his art. Stanislavsky's work over a period of many years laid the foundations of this development. The immediate contact between the art of the cinema and that of the stage came naturally through the actor. So it was with me in the very beginning of my independent work as a producer. Among the large number of actors of various theatrical schools I found those trained by Stanislavsky the most congenial.

* * *

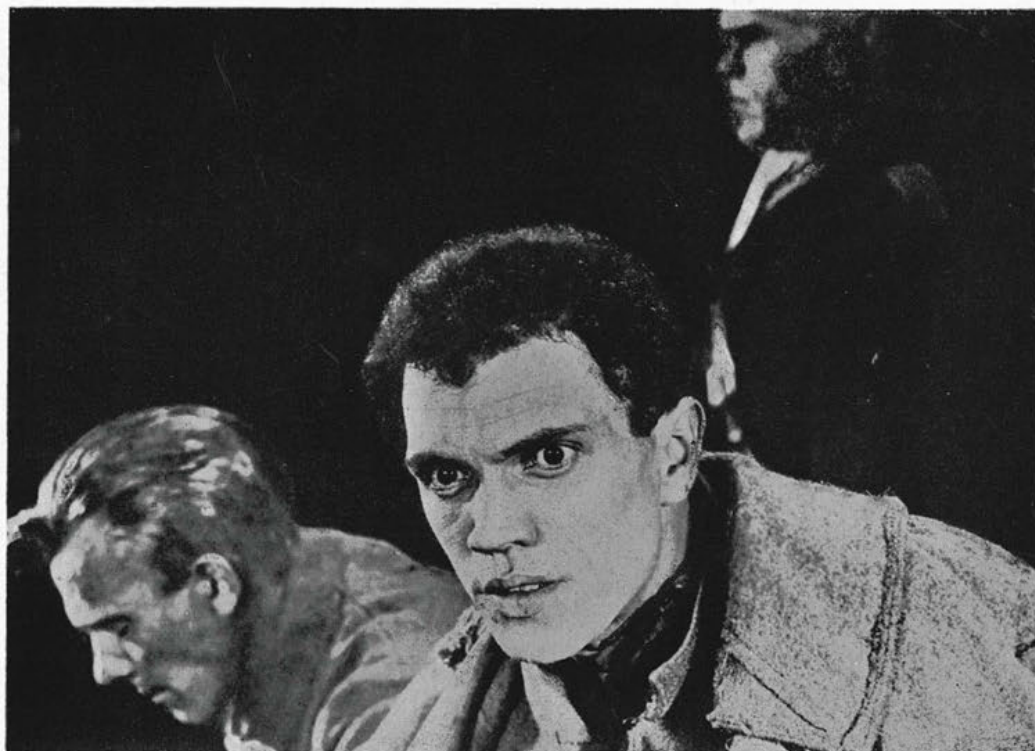
On starting independent work I was already convinced

that the art of the cinema came nearer to giving a true reflection of real life than any other art, and that it could perfectly well do without the theatrical conventions that trammelled the stage. Stanislavsky's system became my school, and my first experiments in cinematography aimed at shaking off every convention of stage technique unnecessary to the screen-actor. From the first I took a dislike to artificial scenery, realising all the cinema's capacity to absorb creatively the natural surroundings in which living people—the actors—can move.

Having acquainted myself with Stanislavsky's method of training actors I realised that while the essence of this realist method was indispensable to cinematic art, much of its technique—created in the special conditions of the stage—was foreign to the very nature of the cinema.

The basis of the Stanislavsky method is first of all how to form a link between the character and the actor's natural personality. Stanislavsky's profound analysis of the process that he called the "transmutation" of the actor—once supposed to be accessible only to men of genius—coupled with incessant experimentation, enabled the producer and actor, by means of consistent and concentrated work, to come closer to the great truthfulness in acting that always conquers the audience, which had previously been regarded as accidental or even of divine inspiration.

The first precept of Stanislavsky's that I studied was that of "living the part". By this Stanislavsky understood the process taking place in the actor's inner self. He knew what a deep gulf lies between the theoretical concept of the inner life of a character formed by the producer and the actor when thinking out the part, and the actual acting on the stage, between even the clearest realisation of what should be done and the acting itself. Every actor and every producer knows how difficult is the first step in this transition from the imagined to the real. The genius of Stanislavsky blazed the trail for this transition. He insisted that every actor should live his part as he would in real life if he were the character he is creating. Naturally, the actor's first steps in this direction must be connected with the world of his personal experience, with memories of how he



Batalov in "Mother." "When I recall Batalov, I always see his look. All the charm of the character he created was in his eyes. I was tempted to take him in close-up all the time..."

has behaved in similar moments. When the actor lives some part of his role fully, be it only for a brief moment, he immediately experiences the joy of success so necessary to every artist. In order to progress, a creative artist must not only understand success but feel it. Such direct personal memories, introduced into the life of the character he is creating, give the actor an example of how he should feel throughout his part, though he has to bridge many gaps between his own consciousness and that of the character.

* * *

When I first met Stanislavsky's pupils and followers, during the production of the film *Mother*, we found it hard going. How was I to find a way to the hearts and minds of the people I was to direct, who were to create characters which as yet existed only in my imagination? That was my difficulty. Theirs was of a different kind; for they were artists, masters of a technique elaborated in close contact with the conventions of the stage. As a producer I found much of their technique unacceptable. Not that their acting had anything artificial about it (as was quite unjustifiably suggested at the time), but there were external peculiarities of acting unwanted on the screen, a theatrical emphasis of speech and gesture needed on the stage in order to be visible and audible to an audience separated from the actors by considerable distances.

Feeling as I did that the screen demanded from acting the nearest possible approach to human behaviour in ordinary life, the first task I set myself and the artists was the search for the greatest possible spontaneity and simplicity. I knew, of course, that a superficially natural reproduction of life was not sufficient, and that the screen, like the stage, needed somewhat heightened expressiveness, but even then I realised the special capacities that distinguished the cinema from the theatre. Clearly, with an actor taken in close-up, what was needed first and foremost was complete truthfulness of acting.

My first experiences in producing met with a sincere and creative response and I felt that the foundations of complete mutual confidence had been laid. One of the first scenes which I took with the actress playing the part of the mother was the following: under the floor the mother finds weapons hidden by her son. This unexpected discovery reveals the terrible danger that threatens him—prison, Siberia, death. She is kneeling on the floor holding the weapons in her hands. There is a knock at the door. She raises her head. The door opens and the first thing she sees are the soles of the feet of a man who is being carried in. Without yet understanding what has happened, she guesses that the man is her husband. Here the task of the actress and of the young and inexperienced producer was an exceptionally difficult one. To begin with I left the actress to act this scene in her own way, and she naturally tried to do this as she would have done on the stage. She sought to arouse in herself a strong emotion expressed only by gestures: she stepped back, put her hands to her head, made various movements—each of which horrified me by its exaggeration. I felt all this to be unnecessary, but what was needed I did not yet know. First I removed all that seemed to me superfluous and exaggerated, and then I decided on a step that even today, as I recall it, amazes me by its temerity, for I was much younger than the actress and far less experienced. This was to suggest that she should act this scene without making a single movement or gesture, while retaining the inner emotional state she had found. The actress did this, and I saw how the complete immobility of one who could arouse in herself a strong and sincere emotion gave her an almost physical sense of suffering. Then I decided on a further step and allowed the actress to make a



Pudovkin's use of professional and non-professional players. Above, Vera Baranovskaia in "*Mother*": the death of the son. Below, Inkijinov, who had never acted before, the trapper-king of "*Storm Over Asia*."

single gesture which I had noticed among the many she had made in the beginning. It was a movement of the hand as of someone naively fending off some terrible threat. I was so deeply persuaded that the inner truth of the emotion would find its best expression in this chosen gesture that I took the risk of filming this scene without any previous rehearsal so as not to lose its freshness.

Thus I began to discover the value of the actor's art through Stanislavsky's training. This experience grew and broadened during my work with other actors, especially with N. Batalov. There was not a single fraction of Pavel's role that was not important to us, "transitional", as we say. We tried to make Batalov's every appearance on the screen not only serve the development of the plot, but, above all, disclose the hero's state of mind. When I recall Batalov, I always see his look. All the charm of the character he created was in his eyes. I was tempted to take him in close-up all the time so that the



spectator could follow the man's emotions reflected in his eyes.

* * *

In my search for means of bringing real life on to the screen I tried to photograph people who were not professional actors. (In those days many people thought that I was trying to replace the actor by the "type", and in my inexperience I even talked like that myself at the time; but I did not set up the "type" against the actor). Curiously enough, as soon as I began to work with non-actors I immediately discovered that they are faced with a number of difficulties which threaten to destroy the precious truth of their behaviour. The unusual surroundings, the conventional demands made by the producer, the presence of the camera—all this puts them off and creates a stiffness which they have to be helped to overcome. Here I discovered the decisive importance, in getting a man to behave unselfconsciously, of a simple physical task which completely absorbs his attention and thus frees him from stiffness. It is particularly important to make him believe in the reality of the task he is set.

My method can best be explained by a simple example. I was taking a "type" in the part of a soldier on guard at the cell where the meeting of mother and son takes place. Beside the soldier I set a plate with remains of food in which a black beetle was stuck. I had thought at first that the juxtaposition of the vacant face of the soldier, of Batalov behind the bars, and of the unfortunate black beetle hopelessly caught in the mess of porridge, would give a certain symbolic emphasis to the general atmosphere of the scene. But the figure of the soldier taken simply as a symbol would not merge with the truth of the scene. In order to enliven the static figure of the sentry, I suggested to the non-actor chosen for the part that he should push the black beetle into the porridge. He became extremely interested in this task and performed it very naturally. The result was most successful. Not only did the soldier come alive, but the very stupidity written on his face was transformed into action.

In order to perform an action not spontaneously but as instructed, a man must have his imagination set to work. He must imagine the desire he does not in fact feel. This is particularly difficult for the non-actor. The practical lesson drawn from work with the non-actors needed in the course of film-producing was that the fewer were the tasks demanding imagination that I set them, the more easily could I get them to behave simply and naturally.

* * *

Stanislavsky created a whole system of work intended to develop the power of imagination in the actor. And it is up to the producer, when helping the artist in his search for truthful acting, to do all he can to remove obstacles to the free play of imagination; further, he must help him by creating a series of impulses that support and develop it, for the less imagination the artist has to expend on picturing the external surroundings, the more easily will he concentrate on his emotions.

Temporarily and conventionally I shall separate two fields of work on creative imagination which in reality are closely linked together: the one connected with the external expression of the actor's thoughts and feelings, his behaviour, and the other connected with his emotional state. When speaking of the behaviour of the actor we must turn to that part of the work on the role which Stanislavsky and his pupils called "physical action". In his search for complete unity in the

actor's living of his part Stanislavsky was impelled in the later stages of his work to pay particular attention to this field. The actor is expressive, he vividly and clearly impresses the spectator, when he is active, when he solves not only the inner problems arising in his mind, but also the external physical problems confronting his will and impulses. The solving of the physical problem, as Stanislavsky rightly understands it, is as it were the culmination of the inner process and must be organically integrated with the whole of the actor's experience of living his part. The "physical action" can be best described as the directed action of one moved by thought and feeling.

The spectacular nature of stage and screen give particular interest to such human actions as are of a vivid visible character. The art of the actor in silent films developed first of all in the field of physical action, where both he and the producer had to seek the greatest possible truthfulness of expression. Here Stanislavsky's ideas proved exceptionally fruitful, while the practical experience of the silent cinema was in its turn useful and important for experimental work on a scale impossible for the theatre. The sub-titles were a sort of summing-up of the deep and subtle unspoken acting which gave full expression to the actor's emotional state.

It is important to note at this point that the cinema did not follow the road of pantomime, that is to say an art which had elaborated conventional signs to replace speech. The fact that the actor was brought close to the spectator, who could thus perceive the most subtle expressions of human emotion—a glance, a hidden smile, a barely perceptible gesture of the hand—freed the cinema from the need to invent artificial conventional signs.

The first claim made on the actor, on which Stanislavsky always insisted, is "transmutation", the ability to transform, by the power of his imagination, his whole self with all his individual traits and qualities, into something different, which belongs no longer to him but to the character he impersonates. In this process of transition it is vital for him to preserve even in imaginary conditions a live personality, thinking and behaving with the same singleness of purpose as does a real man in real life, and neither break nor lose the links indispensable to this singleness of human behaviour. That is why the basis of the actor's art must be the faculty of finding, preserving and strengthening the inner links which make every moment of his acting an indissoluble part of the whole. It is the indispensable co-operation between actor and producer, directed at the main goal—that of giving life to the created character—that produces the capacity to feel when these links are broken and to restore them. The producer who remains an objective observer can immediately realise any such break in the natural unity in any fragment of the part being acted, and he can stop the actor the moment the false note is struck as an inevitable result of this break.

Many know the difficulties experienced by the actor searching for the right intonation, when he tries to utter a word or a phrase first in one way, then in another. Even if as a result of such blind attempts he does find an intonation which he or the producer regards as successful, he may well be unable to remember or to repeat it. The true intonation should be sought, not by hit-or-miss methods, but purposefully in the natural sequence of feeling, gesture and speech. This complex whole, indivisible in real life, should not be formally memorised by the actor but mastered as a real complete activity. This is the path towards realist art.

(Continued on page 147)

Right : Alfred Hitchcock on location for *I Confess*, sheltered under an umbrella while his actors (Anne Baxter and Montgomery Clift) run through the rain. Hitchcock has been preparing this film, story of a priest who hears a murderer's confession but cannot divulge it because of the sanctity of confession, for three years. It is from a play written in 1902 by Louis Verneuil, adapted under Hitchcock's supervision by George Tabori and William Archibald (author of *The Innocents*). Much of the film was shot in and near Quebec. Clift plays the priest.

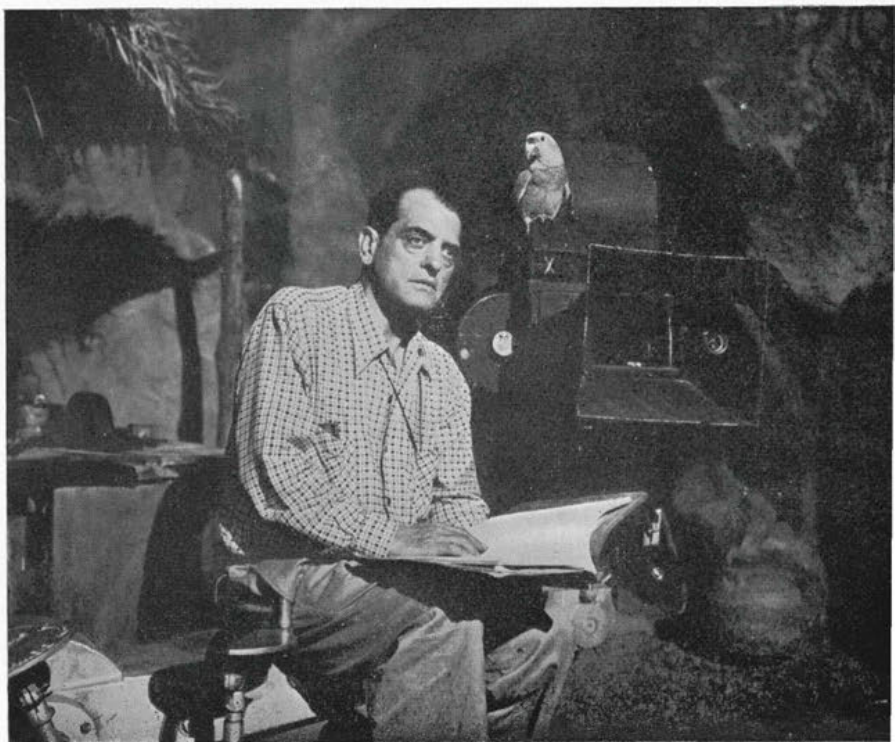
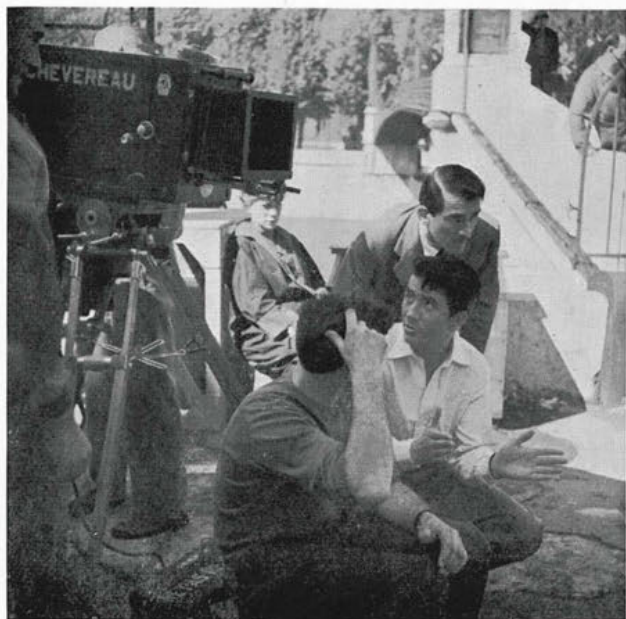
Below : the young unit of *Les Dents Longues*, which marks actor Daniel Gelin's debut as director. Left to right : cameraman Robert Juillard (who photographed *Germany Year Zero*), technical collaborator Marcel Camus (Becker's assistant on *Casque d'Or*), Gélín, and writer Jacques Robert. The central figure is an ambitious young journalist, played by Gélín : leading actress is his wife, Danièle Delorme.



AROUND THE SET

Film-makers and actors observed in action, preparation, rehearsal and relaxation.

Below: Luis Bunuel and white parakeet between scenes of his new film, which is, surprisingly, *Robinson Crusoe*. In this bi-lingual (Spanish-English) version, shot in Warnercolor, Dan O'Herlihy plays Crusoe.

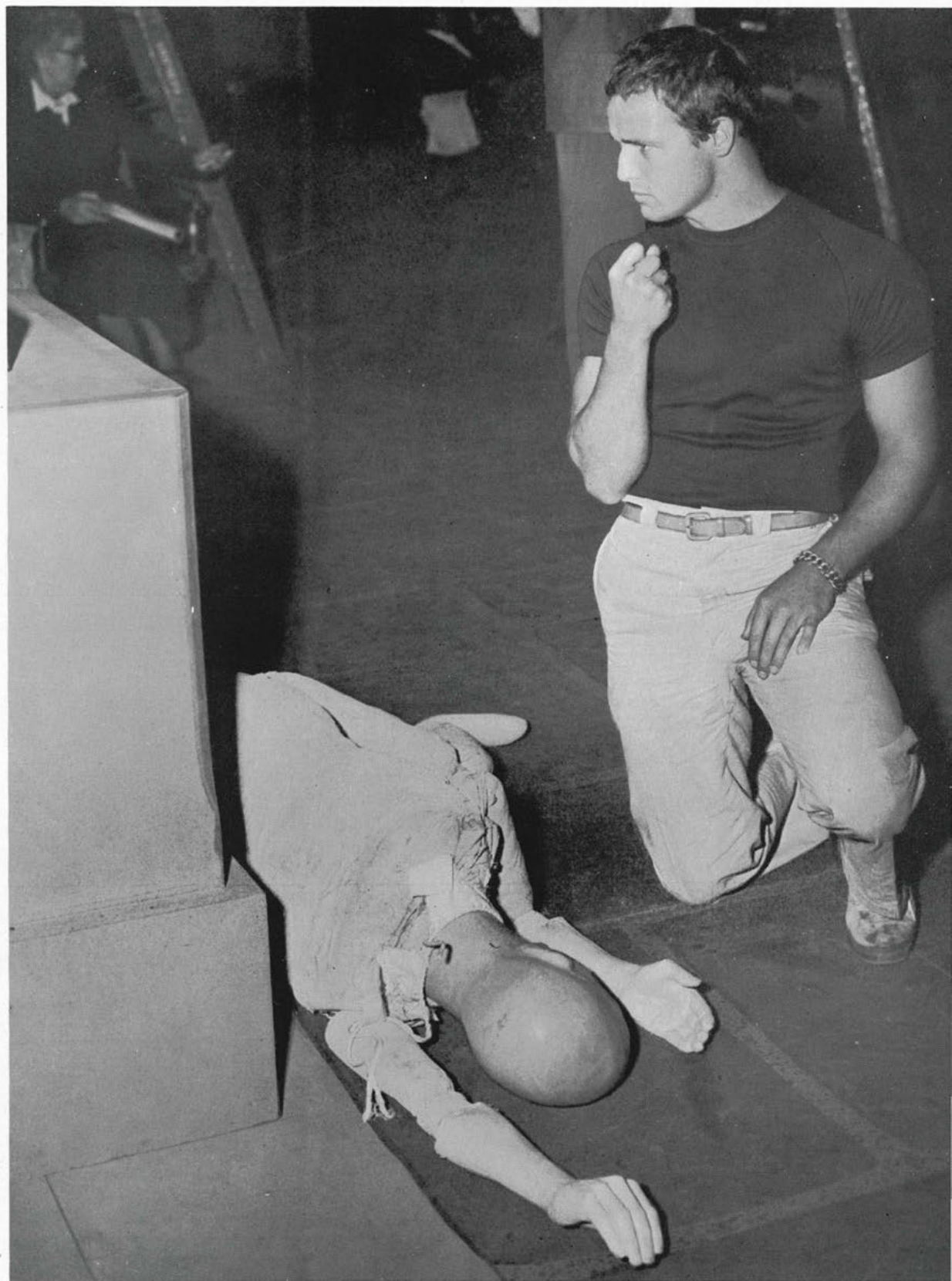




Julie Harris
and
Christopher
Isherwood

On the set of *The Member of the Wedding*, Julie Harris is visited by Christopher Isherwood. She appeared on Broadway in Van Druten's adaptation of Sally Bowles, called *I am a Camera*. Her first film is an adaptation of Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*, in which she also appeared on Broadway, as the lonely 12-year-old tomboy, Frankie. The film is being directed for Stanley Kramer by Fred Zinnemann, with two other members of the Broadway cast, Brandon de Wilde and Ethel Waters.

**Marlon
Brando**



Marlon Brando as Mark Antony rehearses a scene in *Julius Caesar*, kneeling beside the fallen Caesar, represented here by a dummy stand-in from the property department. This black-and-white version of the Shakespeare play has been produced by John Houseman and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with a rich cast including John Gielgud (Cassius), James Mason (Brutus), Louis Calhern (Caesar), Greer Garson (Calpurnia), Deborah Kerr (Portia), Edmond O'Brien (Casca).



The Beggars' Opera

This Wilcox-Neagle production is one of the most ambitious of new British films, and marks the debut in features of stage director Peter Brook, seen here on location in Surrey with Laurence Olivier, in costume for Macheath. (see also page 98).

Another rehearsal scene, this time with the entire main cast assembled. Left to right, Louis Calhern, James Mason, John Gielgud, Greer Garson, adaptor-director Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Edmond O'Brien, Marlon Brando and Deborah Kerr. The film, which is in black and white, was extensively pre-rehearsed, and many of the scenes are reported to involve long takes.

Julius Caesar





"Limelight": the ballet. Chaplin as the clown, Andre Egley as Harlequin, Claire Bloom as colombine.

"THE ELEGANT MELANCHOLY OF TWILIGHT"

Impressions of "Limelight"

Gavin Lambert

THIS repeated phrase, heard first as a lightly nostalgic aside in the old music-hall artist's daydream of a young lover's meeting, recapitulated in the final scene with an ineffable sadness, breathes the underlying atmosphere of *Limelight*. Dawn broke, noon came, many years ago; now the sun has cooled and shadows, everywhere, are lengthening. The film's enormous pathos seems to have disconcerted some, which is rather difficult to understand. Perhaps recollection has tended to make a comfortable cliché of Charlie, the man who made us laugh more than anyone else. Yet not long ago the revival of *City Lights* brought back his deep inherent melancholy, and there have been other and earlier signs. There was, in 1916, the delicate and touching little episode of *The Vagabond*; there was, in 1918, the unfinished *Life*, begun as a full-length feature for Essanay and abandoned because of the company's demand for short comedies; there was the ecstatic pastoral, *Sunnyside*, in 1919, and of course *A Woman of Paris* in 1923. The "serious business" of life has in fact occupied Chaplin for a long time, and this was, curiously enough, noticed first of all in France. After *The Kid*, in 1922, Louis Delluc was moved to write, in his monograph on Chaplin: "I stand amazed at the immense sadness of Chaplin . . . This man will be lucky if he doesn't die in a madhouse." Time may again have something to tell.

The myth of the clown who wants to play Hamlet, as applied to Chaplin, has always been irrelevant. For some people, including Hamlet, have been gifted enough to do both. Thirty years ago Chaplin had encompassed tragedy-comedy with a purity of form and feeling unique in the cinema, and from a historical point of view the qualities of *Limelight* are beautifully logical; what is less logical, perhaps,

is the intense success with which they have been realised. At 63 Chaplin has executed an imaginative portrait of the artist as an old man and shown his creative powers to be at their height. The cinema is apt to exhaust its great talents early, but *Limelight* has all the vitality and sureness of Chaplin's best work, and it touches some new moments of experience. To examine it is rather like taking hold of a miracle; but one must try.

II

"The evening of life brings with it its lamp." Chaplin's lamp is an image of youth, a wistful and radiant vision that he seems to have kept within himself, and that haunts him now as a bright, sad consolation, a symbol of the continuous evanescence and renewal of living. In the time of Charlie this vision was communicated perhaps most perfectly in *The Kid* and in *City Lights*, films which *Limelight* resembles in dramatic construction, and in its account of the relationship—protective on one side, dependent on the other, then suddenly reversed—between two human beings. The "apotheosis" of *The Kid* and of *Limelight*, the dream of Heaven and the ballet, is another point of correspondence; and as the story of Charlie and the blind girl in *City Lights* is an extension of the story of Charlie and the Kid, so the new film takes this personal situation a stage further.

One can see each of these three films as to some extent a variation on a theme, and *Limelight* discovers the subtlest and most complex variations of all. In the meeting of Calvero the music-hall comedian on the way down and Terry the dancer on the way up, many antitheses are explored: age and youth, experience and innocence, failure and success,

patience and desperation, giving and receiving; beyond the particular story is the generality of "life" itself, the great abstractions which Charlie used unwittingly to suggest and which Chaplin, in a grave maturity, has begun to see for himself.

The poetic unity of *Limelight* is a deep, calm fatal emanation of sadness, the *motif* of which is constantly reiterated. It begins with a classical directness. After the opening shot of the London street, with its barrel organ and its watching children, we are taken straight into the drama, following the camera into the lodging house, into the room with the girl sprawled on the bed, the poison phial in her hand, the gas stove turned on, then returning to the street along which Calvero, happily drunk, approaches. His discovery of the girl, his eager desire to help, to revive her, in spite of his drunkenness—half absurd, half touching—shows how he has been affected, more deeply than he guesses, by her act. The early dialogue scenes between them, his passionate affirmations, from the other side of disillusion, of the beauty of living, her gradual revival of trust and love, have a marvellous strength and softness. In the variety of emotions they touch off—Calvero's exquisite mime of the rose's desire to grow and the rock's to stay firm, the girl's halting confession of her unhappiness, a trio of nocturnal street entertainers outside, the traditional comedy of flirtation with the plump landlady—one is reminded of Taine's verdict on Dickens: "*the master of all hearts.*" Sometimes it is like being in the same room with the characters, listening to Calvero as he muses and talks, glancing across at the girl on the bed to note her reactions. The interpolation of Calvero's first dream, the superb comedy of the flea-trainer act, and its final pathetic twist, soon takes the story on to another level; the coming together of these two people at this particular moment under these particular circumstances is to be contemplated from every angle. As

Calvero's experience and wisdom attracts Terry, so it will make him later withdraw; as his failure arouses her instinct to protect him, so her success will isolate him; from him she will recapture the joy of her youth, but want to share it with someone as young as herself; and having enjoyed his youth again through her, he will be reminded of how irrevocably it has vanished. Everything that brings them together also draws them apart.

The setting matches the deliberate simplicity of the tale, as formal in its way as the backcloths to the ballet. Chaplin frames his film in a London of the 1910's, post-Victorian and yet not unreminiscent of Dickens. ("*To him the streets of southern London.*" Somerset Maugham records in *A Writer's Notebook*, after a meeting in 1922, "*are the scene of frolic, gaiety and extravagant adventure . . . I suspect the only home he can ever look upon as such is a second floor back in the Kennington Road.*"). The heroine herself, with her frightened beauty and fragile tenderness, is also not unlike one of Dickens'. In passing, the accuracy of the feeling for London—the perfect music-hall idiom, the figure of the manageress at the restaurant where Terry and the composer go to lunch, the lodging-house decor—emphasise how Chaplin's memories of London, the scene of early poverty and privation for him, have persisted. When he made *Limelight*, he had not visited it for twenty years.

III

The directness of sentiment in *Limelight* has found its detractors, as direct sentiment always does; nothing exposes an artist more. It is easy enough to write about today's Chaplin as "sententious" (wasn't Dickens?), as "self-pitying" (wasn't Hamlet?) or "self-infatuated" (wasn't Hamlet, again?), but these charges seem to reflect a temperamental dislike of the film's approach rather than to refute it. They miss the



"Limelight": the tragic comedian.

"Limelight": the reunion of Calvero and Terry. Chaplin, Claire Bloom.



essential thing, the passion which is the motive and the justification of *Limelight*. Nothing could be truer to itself; the difference is in the identification point. Charlie the tramp, the anarchist, was everyone's symbol, and Chaplin since *The Great Dictator* has ceased to be that. In his last three films he has become articulate, and become a particular person. The fact that *The Great Dictator* and *Monsieur Verdoux* did not make the transition completely, that they were manifestly imperfect films, may account for the unwillingness of many to appreciate what Chaplin was trying to do. Because Chaplin tells the story of *Limelight*, as of most of his other films, in simple and superficially old-fashioned terms, it has been assumed that the emotions which go with it are old-fashioned. The same reproach is levelled at Stroheim and, with some justification, at Griffith. There is no doubt that Chaplin, Stroheim and Griffith, the three great masters of the American silent film, share a moral attitude to life derived from the 19th century, and as film-makers have used many of the 19th century novelists' methods. But to condemn this only reflects the naive fallacy that any age is artistically self-contained, and that true "contemporary" art must discard all traditional methods. The revolutionary artist is not the only valid one; what counts on the personal level is the artist's own imagination and technique, whether stimulated by tradition or repelled by it. While Chaplin's films often suggest Dickens, and Stroheim's Balzac, one must admit that Griffith did not always rise above, imaginatively, Ouida or Harrison Ainsworth. Yet the conception of *Intolerance* remains bold and universally valid, even if the creative power is not always equal to it; the analysis of sexual motives in *The Wedding March* or in *Greedy* is overwhelmingly individual; the dramatic core of *Limelight* is, particularly for the cinema, extremely daring, both in the nature of the relationship between Calvero and the young girl, and the detailed penetration of it.

IV

If the core of the film seems to be a reiterated lament for the passing of life and love by someone who feels these things to be profoundly sad, and is engaged in making a difficult peace with himself, its expression is richly varied. Apart from the scenes of direct statement between Calvero and

Terry—of which the two most powerfully conceived and burdened with emotion are the girl's discovery that she can walk and their reunion, after his failure and her success, when Terry can no longer say "I love you" but only "I'll do anything to make you happy"—the film moves surely on two further levels; the long ballet sequence, itself a poetic analogy of the whole situation, in which Chaplin's clown, called in to amuse Terry's dying Colombine, is a supremely touching creation, and the vaudeville comedy, some of which is pure, some (the "Spring" number with Terry) an expression of Calvero's own immediate feelings. Within the story itself there is no slapstick, but a certain amount of traditional comedy and, in the dialogue, of irony; the actual world of the clown is separated into the music-hall acts. In this way *Limelight* has far more unity than *Verdoux*, which veered from farce to sentiment, satire to caricature, and lost, I think, the singleness of purpose its subject demanded. *Limelight* shows Chaplin the actor and Chaplin the film-maker equally prominent. He uses dialogue and sound with as much mastery as he brought to silent film-making at the peak of his career in *City Lights*. As a director, Chaplin's talent has often been under-rated; his best films have always been carefully constructed, the simplicity of their continuity is disciplined, and his use of the camera for recording physical action no less remarkable in its way than that of Stroheim or Pabst. Far from lacking "cinematic" interest, some of the early sketches like *The Vagabond*, *The Pawnshop*, *Easy Street*, as well as the longer pictures are unique examples of it. The farewell to the gipsy girl in *The Vagabond*, the pancake-making in *The Kid* (which took two weeks to shoot), the dance of the rolls in *The Gold Rush*, the final scene of *City Lights*, are executed with an intensity and precision which the brilliance of Chaplin's acting has perhaps tended to obscure. Their angling, their tempo, their cutting, are of the cinema or nothing. Of the major films, only in *Modern Times*, *The Dictator* and *Verdoux*—which will, I believe, seem in perspective the most transitional of his career, the gradual elimination of Charlie being a rather intellectual process and reflecting, especially in the sometimes shrill bitterness of *Verdoux*, the lack of emotional shelter which he found in *Limelight*—is the style considerably less satisfying.

There are passages in *Limelight*—the revelation of the empty

auditorium after the flea-trainer routine, the filming of Terry's audition, the overhead shot of the scene change during the ballet, the exquisite moment, in the final sequence, when Terry dances into the foreground of the frame, momentarily obscuring Calvero's body on a stretcher in the wings—that seem even an advance, as descriptive cinema, on anything that Chaplin has done before. "Let's have no photographic Hollywood chi-chi," he is reported to have said when starting *Verdoux*, and leaned over backwards to avoid it; but in *Limelight* he has recognised the pleasure of expressively composed and toned photography. Many of Karl Struss's images, particularly in the ballet sequence, have style and charm.

As for the reproach that the dialogue scenes are theatrically handled, Chaplin's dialogue is not the idiomatic, naturalistic kind that one usually hears in the cinema and that responds to smoothness and rapidity in the handling. It needs leisure, and the narrative has the spread and occasional awkwardness of a 19th century novel. I don't think it vital to detail the awkwardnesses, since they are obvious and relatively unimportant. It is, though, a pity that Chaplin has cut the beautiful scene, and the passage that leads into it, between Calvero and Claudius, the "armless wonder"; in a long and episodic work one notices gaps much more sharply. Continuity is dislocated, a minor character now simply appears without being established, and the first of the long dialogues between Calvero and Terry starts rather abruptly.

V

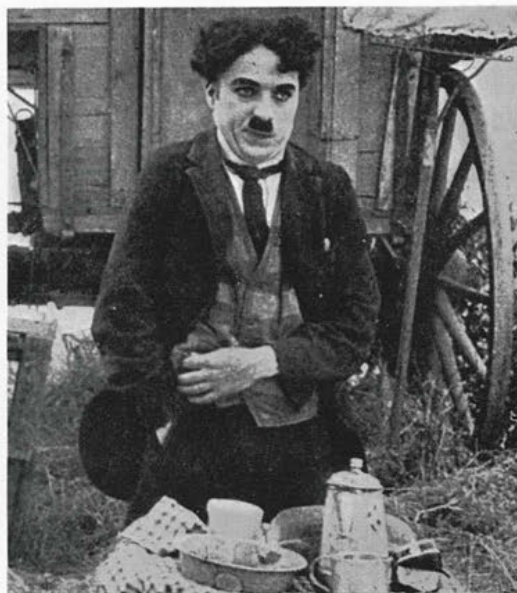
The comedy in *Limelight* continues the line of sophistication drawn in parts of *Verdoux*. We are made conscious of two conventions; of the old-fashioned London music-hall, and of Chaplin's own pantomime style, a deviation from it. The final sequence with Buster Keaton, classically abstracted as ever, is probably the "straightest" comedy turn in the film, with its gags impeccably accumulated both in the action and the use of the camera. Yet even here Chaplin's demonic fiddler, a sort of Mephisto Waltz parody, suggests a diversion. The difference seems to be that Charlie's humour was the humour of a figure who had become a universal symbol, and that in *Limelight*, in keeping with the rest, the comedy is the comedy of character. Calvero is one particular comedian, not Charlie. Of course there are echoes of him, but the make-

up alone makes one feel they too are part of a convention, not a deliberate return to the old manner. It is interesting to compare Chaplin's gags with a violin in *Limelight* with Charlie's in *The Vagabond*; at least one ("playing" his moustache with the bow) is exactly the same, but the effect—casual, throw-away, in the earlier film, deliberate and emphatic in the later—quite different. *Limelight* presents the new Chaplin mask. All kinds of comparisons have been found for the original Charlie mask, from Japanese prints to Durer, but, as Delluc wrote, "*He is his own painter, his very own.*" So, too, in *Limelight* the comedy mask is Calvero painted as a clown—or, if you like, Charles Chaplin painted as a clown. It is rich in associations, for behind the mask, one cannot help thinking, is not only Calvero-Chaplin but, remotely, the old Charlie; and since the mask is assumed, separated from the rest of the film, painted on and wiped off during the action, there is something extraordinary about it, like a ghost.

Superbly done as the turns are, it is Chaplin's dramatic performance that is the film's most impressive acting achievement. He shows a range and mastery of effect that one might, perhaps, have suspected, but are no less breathtaking when one sees them. There are three close-ups as finely expressive as anything ever gained by this device: in the theatre dressing-room when, after attempting his comeback, Calvero wipes off his make-up and, staring into the mirror, meets the image of failure; Calvero as the flea-trainer in his dream, looking at the deserted auditorium, and the matching dissolve to his own tortured face in his bedroom; and the close-up of the dying Calvero with the immobile head, the fixed eyes, and the suddenly, minutely twitching mouth. The character as a whole is realised with beautiful completeness; and Chaplin was fortunate in his choice of Claire Bloom, whose Dickensian heroine is tenderly and delicately played.

VI

It is difficult to avoid coming back to Dickens, not only because of the evident stylistic affinities, but the more private emotional ones: the shared childhood of London poverty that has never been forgotten, the self-identification with outcasts, the fear of talent drying up, the personal memory of an adored young girl (in Chaplin's case Hetty Kelly, in



The two masks: in "*The Vagabond*," 1916, and as the flea-trainer of "*Limelight*," 1952.

Dickens' Mary Hogarth) lost without ever having been really possessed, pursued both in life and in a succession of imaginative portraits, and the increasing seriousness and disenchantment—with society and with self, the “old unhappy loss or want of something.” In many ways *Limelight*, like *Our Mutual Friend*, seems like a last word.

Yet Chaplin, we know, does not intend it to be that; and perhaps he has indicated the future best in the scene when Calvero and Terry meet again in the pub, and when he tells her that nothing has gone, it has only changed. She asks him: “Why won't you come back?” His answer is sad, proud, also ironic and a little self-deprecating: “I can't. I must go on. That's progress.”

The Current Cinema

JEUX INTERDITS (The Secret Game)

Reviewed by Catherine de la Roche

The truer the characters any author creates, the less amenable to manipulation is their story. They partly take charge of it themselves, as it were, revealing truths that may seem contradictory and lead only indirectly to some conclusion. *Jeux Interdits* (Film Traders) is a film of marvellously true images in which two children and their elders reveal themselves at a moment when war and death touch their lives. Their personal drama is, by implication and therefore all the more movingly, an indictment of war.

Among the refugees fleeing South under dive-bomber attacks in the summer of 1940 are Paulette, aged five, her parents and her puppy. A methodical row of machine-gun bullets rips through the chaos of people and vehicles on a congested bridge. Lifting her head in the momentary lull, Paulette gazes, perplexed, at the inanimate bodies of her parents by her side and of the puppy in her arms. In the resumed stampede the puppy's body is flung into the river. She retrieves it a long way downstream, near a peaceful, sunn; meadow where Michel, aged ten, is chasing a runaway cow. Since she is an orphan “from the highroad” and, perhaps, also because she is a lovely golden-haired child, more delicate than any he has seen, Michel takes her home.

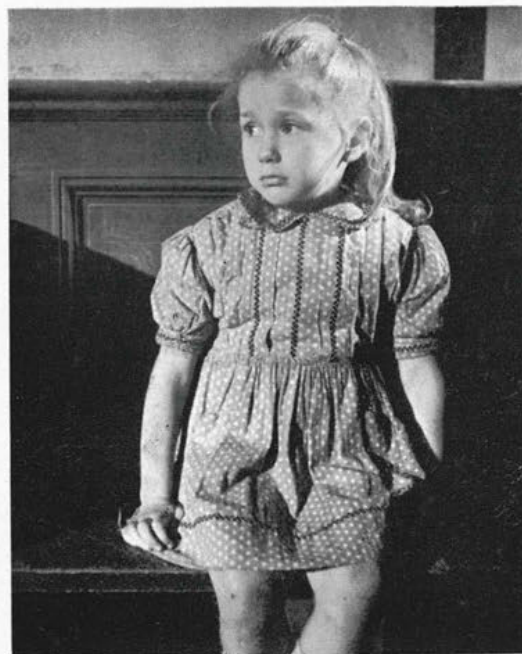
His home is an old farm, as poor, crude and dirty as the large peasant family of which he is the youngest, and which has also suffered a misfortune. An uncle was injured during the bombing and is being carried to bed with clumsy care as the children arrive. Paulette will be an extra burden, but the peasants take her in. Enchanted by her gentleness, manners and cleanliness, they are all the more shocked to discover this Parisian child's ignorance: she does not know any prayers, nor realise that the crucifix on the wall “is le bon dieu”. For her part, Paulette gives all her trust to Michel. When, on the first night, she is left alone in a huge, grimy, sheetless bed in the loft, it is he who runs up for a chat and dispels her fear of darkness. And it is he who explains a puzzling remark she has overheard, to the effect that “in war people are buried in holes like dogs”.

Next morning, as Michel digs a “hole” for her puppy in his favourite hiding place near an old water mill, she learns that people are normally buried in cemeteries “so as not to be lonely”, and have beautiful crosses. Paulette wants the same for the puppy. For the moment Michel knows of only one companion for it, a dead mole, but promises her a “proper cemetery”. Meanwhile his uncle dies. At the funeral the children have eyes only for crosses—little carved ones on the hearse; the gilded one caught in a sunbeam over the altar; the elaborate ones in the graveyard. That night, in the fitful light of a distant air raid, Michel brings a barrow load of trophies from the church yard to the water mill: fourteen “proper” crosses, including his uncle's.

Its disappearance is discovered when the whole family, in deep mourning, come to put fresh flowers on his grave. Only malice, they assume, could be the motive, and only their detested neighbours, with whom they have a longstanding feud, could be capable of it. In revenge, the father smashes the cross on one of their family graves, just as they, the neighbours, arrive with flowers as a peace offering. The two fathers have a furious fight, tumbling into a newly dug grave, where, as the symbolism of this extraordinary image suggests, their senseless enmity and all life's real prejudices, blasphemies and hypocrisies should be buried. For, in the general confusion, Michel has been found out, and the two bewildered men realise they have no reason to fight.

Paulette never sees the little cemetery Michel had made in the hope of consoling her. He only has time to tell her about the pebbles and crosses and bright bits of china with which the puppy's and its companions' graves are decked, before the police take her, heartbroken, to a Red Cross post for war orphans. Desperate to keep her in the family, Michel makes a bargain with his father: if Paulette may stay, he will return the crosses. But the bargain is not honoured, and, in his misery, Michel hurls the crosses into the river.

Jeux Interdits (adapted from François Boyer's novel) might be called a tragi-comedy on the theme of innocence, or a fairy tale created by children out of reality, or, better, a film that will remain unique in its style, unclassifiable. Unique above all because of the tender, radiant screen image that director René Clement and cameraman Robert Juillard have created of Brigitte Fossey as Paulette, contrasting it brilliantly with the robust and sometimes satirical images of the peasants, including Georges Poujouly as Michel. For if Michel has the sensibility to understand Paulette's inarticulate feelings and win her affection, he has not her innocence. Warm-hearted, quick-witted, the only one in the family to know his catechism (with a fancy version for when he is vexed), he is a bit of a rogue. Though his only motive in seeking out dead animals for the cemetery is devotion to Paulette, who insists there must be no killing, this does not prevent him from hastening the demise of



Brigitte Fossey in “Jeux Interdits.”

a chick, especially since it is the neighbours'. And he knows well enough that in transplanting the crosses he is stealing. But of sacrilege neither child knows anything. And it may be that they come nearer to using the crucifix as a symbol of love than do their elders.

For the peasants, alarmed by Paulette's ignorance of religion, are nearly as ignorant—“Lamplight”, according to the thrifty father, “is not for reading”. Their own religion is so blind that the *grande bataille* in the churchyard can hardly be treated seriously. Neither is it. Directed with remarkable sureness as comedy, it is a comment on the follies and false values of a warring world in which children quite naturally make death the motif of a secret game. Indeed, all the manifestations of the feud between the two families are illumined by wit, counterpointing the main theme of the screenplay, which is one of the best written by the distinguished scenarists Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost. And the music by Narcisso Yepes, especially the melancholy air played on a harp which belongs to Paulette, is as remarkably apt.

But it is the quality of the screen images that gives this film its distinction—the acting, Paul Bertrand's sets, the grouping, the faces. Paulette's face, for instance, becoming transfigured with joy as Michel describes the new ornaments in their cemetery; four figures at table, their heads raised, listening with gleeful irony to the young neighbour's efforts on his army clarion; or Michel in the

enormous grange, facing his father, as the police take Paulette away through the doorway at the far end. Unless these images—the characters and their environment—were true, this extraordinary film would disintegrate into myriad fragments of farce, pathos, blasphemy, obscure argument, poetry and starkest naturalism—all confused and unrelated. But, whether seen in the light of comedy, fantasy or reality, the characters are true.

PERSONAL PRODUCTIONS

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

Once or twice a year, Darryl Zanuck and Dore Schary, production chiefs of Fox and M.G.M., put their names to a personal production. The Zanuck terrain has become familiar; after the discreetly controversial *Pinky* and *Gentleman's Agreement*, he has turned to the big, glittering production with a dash, more or less, of culture: *All About Eve*, *Viva Zapata* and now *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. *Kilimanjaro* has a veteran director, Henry King, whose record spans the years from *Tol'able David* to *David and Bathsheba*, a title and a just recognisable plot-line from Ernest Hemingway, the screen's favourite literary panjandrum, and a quartet of stars, the solidly established Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward, the rising Ava Gardner and the most recent importation from Europe, Hildegard Neff, publicised to taste as the new Garbo or the new Bergman.

The austere, bitter twenty pages of the dying novelist's memories and regrets have been transformed by Casey Robinson into a lush, two-hour, traveloguish tour through Hemingway—Middle West boyhood, Paris in the 'twenties, a bullfight, the Spanish Civil War (with Ava Gardner dying, picturesque as ever, under her ambulance) and two safaris. One waited, but in vain, for Gregory Peck to call someone "daughter". Basically, the story of three women and one man sticks to the old Hollywood conventions of romantic love, gingered up with some literary chitchat (the hero's novels are called *The Lost Generation* and *The Road to Rouen*, a characteristic

mis-hit), some rather obscurely symbolic talk about hunting from a wise old uncle, and large doses of fashionable self-pity. The film leaves plenty of time, between flashbacks, for reflection on just what damage the glamourisation of the marshmallow-hearted tough guy has done to contemporary literature and to the screen. But the picture, falsifying his situations and wrenching his dialogue out of context, underlines Hemingway's very considerable weaknesses while scarcely suggesting his undeniable qualities.

Finally, after Susan Hayward has put in some smart surgical work with a carving knife and a symbolic hyena has made a snuffing tour of the camp, the film tacks on a happy ending which almost makes nonsense of its story. The three women, the romanticised lost love (Ava Gardner, more plausible than usual), the high-life interlude (Hildegard Neff), and the game, nurse-maidish second wife (Susan Hayward), scarcely convince, but Gregory Peck gives a strong, honest, if rather over-intelligent, performance, making the most of a part built up from those hectic clichés by which the screen tries to fashion something exciting from the unrewarding lives of the painter, the composer or the novelist.

While Zanuck may seem to have moved on, Dore Schary remains the screen's top-ranking humanitarian, as devoted to good causes as a professional flag-seller. His latest production, *The Plymouth Adventure*, concerned with the voyage of the *Mayflower*, has yet to be seen here, but two rather earlier films deserve notice as characteristic exercises. *It's a Big Country*, released in the U.S.A. during 1951, is a drum-beating, Fourth of July speech-making, tribute to God's Own Country, with seven episodes geared mostly to sentiment or to whimsical comedy. An introduction from Louis Calhern, spinning a globe and recognising the existence of other nations, seems to have taken the place, for European consumption, of the bravely unequivocal message: "Hurrah for America!" The picture's kindly, quaint, comical, unbelievable Americans are piloted through their anecdotal adventures by six directors and a dozen or so writers, including Schary himself, who was responsible for the original story. An all-star cast, led by Ethel Barrymore, Fredric Marsh, Gene Kelly and Van Johnson, battle heroically with the Irish, Greek and Italian accents demanded from most of them.

The film would be naively innocuous, if rather sickly, like a meal of girdle cakes and syrup, were it not for two sequences so characteristically well intentioned and so unfortunately carried out as to deserve comment. One reel is given up to the American Negro, to newsreel shots of soldiers and sailors, to flashes of distinguished people such as Ralph Bunche, Joe Louis, Ray Robinson, Lena Horne, Ethel Waters. To an American this may look like a courageous gesture, but to a European audience the tone seems unpalatably patronising. Another sequence concerns an anti-Semitic housewife who is visited by a Jewish friend of her son, a Korean war casualty, and converted to a more tolerant frame of mind when he reads her a singularly unlikely letter to himself from the dead boy. Crudely played and written, elaborately implausible in the mechanics leading up to the letter-reading, this scene embarrasses by its sentimental excesses and facile resolution.

The second Schary production, *Target for Scandal*, combines a tour of the sights of Washington with the story about the hard-boiled woman reporter who tries to get something on the honest New England Congressman, falls in love with him and gives up the idea, then is dismayed when she believes that he has been involved in graft after all. As played by Van Johnson, Patricia Neal and Louis Calhern, and written and directed by Robert Pirosh, this little political comedy, with its echoes of Capraism, mildly amuses without ever really getting going. Its purpose, in election year, seems to be to assure the American voter that Washington has other interests besides the pursuit of mink coats and that, as one American reviewer put it, "in all probability the House of Representatives contains one idealistic, hard-working and scrupulously honest Congressman". The slightly starry-eyed tone, however, leaves an impression of question-begging. Dore Schary used to make tough, vigorous films with something to say; one regrets his apparent retreat into a never-never land where everything happens for the best and where the dangerous subjects—corruption, racial intolerance—are raised only to be dismissed with a tear or a laugh.

The doyen of the independent producers, Sam Goldwyn, has abandoned the problems of adopted daughters and reluctant conscripts to make, in *Hans Christian Andersen*, a seasonable fairy story that harks back to an earlier and more spectacular manner. As fifteen years ago he employed Balanchine and Zorina for *Goldwyn Follies*, so he now uses Roland Petit and Renée Jeanmaire,

"It's a Big Country." Ethel Barrymore, embodiment of it.



and to something of the same effect. A foreword warns that the film is not intended as a biography, but is based "upon the famous Danish poet's wonderful philosophy of life . . . He knew instinctively that people were decent human beings and he never wavered from that belief". The wonderful philosophy seems to bear some relationship to Mr. Goldwyn's own. The advice is just as well, since with Danny Kaye in the title role one expects, and gets, not a character study (the writer, with his nervous melancholy, his habit of travelling with a coil of rope attached to his luggage in case the hotel should catch fire, would make an interesting, if unromantic, figure) but a highly practised essay in the familiar whimsical charm. Hans, a kindly, simple cobbler, fonder of telling stories than of mending shoes, falls hopelessly in love with a ballerina (Renée Jeanmaire) whom he believes to be ill-treated by her impresario husband (Farley Granger); for her, he writes *The Little Mermaid*. Served up as a twenty minute ballet, with its story somewhat softened, this forms the centre of the film.

Hans Andersen provides a sugary plot, turns the fairy stories into cute little songs (an enterprise as thankless, however well done, as the translation of the Bible into basic English) and ambles through its two hours at a slow jog trot. One of those major productions on which immense care, time and money have clearly been expended, it lacks only the elusive qualities of taste and imagination. The ballet, choreographed by Roland Petit, danced by Petit and Jeanmaire, with decor by the French stage designer Clavé, solves the problems of screen presentation no better than most filmed ballets, and is designed with opulent vulgarity; the village streets and the Copenhagen market settings have a pretty, toy-like air that could have been delightful, and yet is not. The last word on a film of this sort is perhaps best left to the publicity handout, where one reads of the sixteen years Goldwyn spent planning the film, the twenty-one scripts discarded before Moss Hart's was chosen, the set taking up 30,000 square feet and the 100,000 man hours spent on the preparation of the ballet. One is left sadly to reflect that, with films as with boxers, the bigger they come the harder they fall.

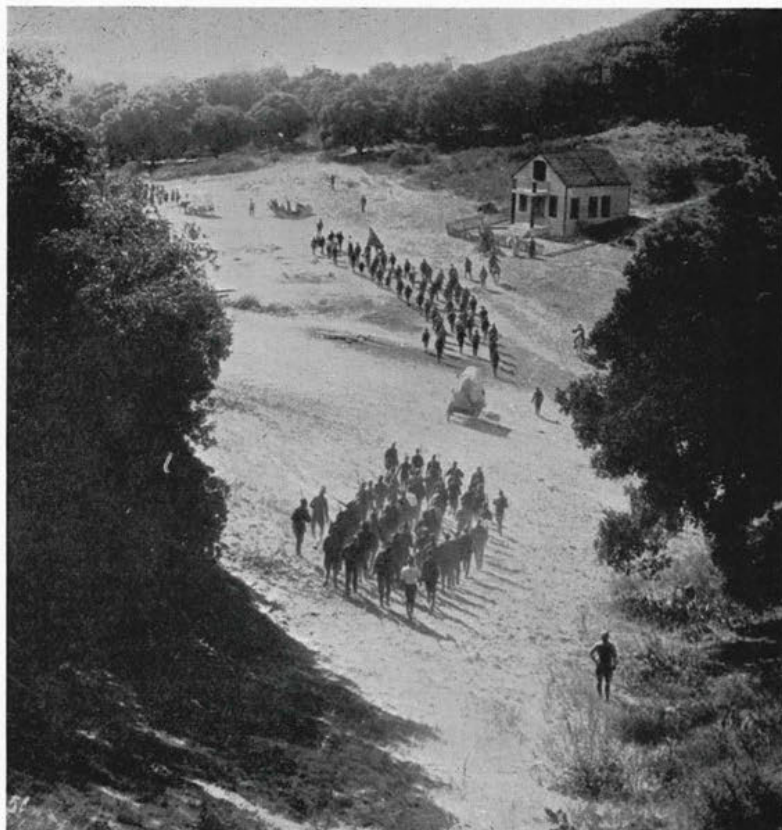
BIRTH OF A NATION

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

As every Film Appreciator knows, *The Birth of a Nation* is the earliest surviving example of the Film as an Art. Or at least, of all the contestants to that title, the most readily available: film societies have long used it to study Griffith's pioneering use of close-up and long-shot, his fiercely dynamic editing, his exploitation of the tracking camera, his fine casting sense and brilliant handling of players, his experiments in parallel cutting which led him on to the magnificent folly of *Intolerance*. Now the film has been re-released as a commercial feature, and we gain the rather extraordinary experience of seeing the picture once more, not merely as an object of historical and academic interest, but performing the function for which it was created—that is to say, the entertainment and edification of popular audiences. Does it survive?

Before that question can be answered, there is another point to consider. Does the new version adequately represent Griffith's work of nearly forty years ago? In the first place it has been shortened: the original silent film ran about 12,500 feet, this one is nearly 3,000 feet less. A sound track has been added, carrying crowd noises and battle effects, with here and there an occasional shriek, as well as the original score by Joseph Breil, part composed for the film and part arranged from already existing music (songs and marches of the Civil War, Grieg, Wagner, etc.). And since the negative has not been "stretched", projection of the film at sound speed involves the acceleration of movement on the screen by about fifty per cent.

Not all these alterations are serious. The cuts do not seem savage; apart from the loss of the allegorical conclusion (depicting "The coming of the Prince of Peace, the free intermingling of the world's peoples, and the victory of love in Christ"), whereby the film's close is both lamed and distorted, the gaps are not obtrusive, and all the scenes which have remained in the memory through a four-year interval reappear. The sound effects help rather than hinder, and the music is excellent. The change in projection speed, however, is highly regrettable. It is ironic to recall Bitzer's description of "the tremendous zeal, energy and genius Griffith put into having its timing just so, its tempo right to a hair. I remember how hard he worked through the day, and then far into the night . . ." What would he have said to this speeding-up, severely impairing its spectacle and many of its most sensitive dramatic moments? The



"Birth of a Nation."

appreciation of silent screen acting, with its generally accentuated style, usually requires some adjustment on the part of a contemporary audience; the principal performances here are extraordinarily good, but it would be unreasonable to expect them to stand up wholly to this treatment. Particularly sad is the effect on Mae Marsh's beautiful performance as Flora Cameron, vivid and mercurial, with the thoughtless innocence of a bird: the touching figure becomes a silly puppet, the eager movements distorted into frenetic parody. One can hardly blame the audience for laughing.

Adjustment, therefore, has to be made; and it is worth making because the vitality of the creation still persists. By the standards of developed cinema (which this film, of course, helped to establish) the rhythm is rather distractingly discontinuous. One sees how the use of titles—instead of a pre-planned visual continuity—made it possible for Griffith to carry a whole film in his head, dispensing with a finely organised script, and shooting to a great extent off the cuff. Inevitably the result now seems choppy; and particularly where the dramatic continuity is interrupted for the insertion of a *tableau vivant* representation of some historical event (generally "after" a well-known painting of the scene). It is futile, too, to claim that Griffith's staging and handling remains unsurpassed: compare, for instance, the assassination of Lincoln here with its representation—very similarly done—in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*. Perhaps Ford did it better than Griffith because Griffith had done it first; it does the more primitive work no favour to claim for it a supremacy it no longer possesses. Particularly when there is still so much in it to astonish and entertain. The battle scenes are magnificent: the wonderful pan from the refugees sheltering on the hillside to the valley below where Sherman's columns are on the march "from Atlanta to the sea"; the excitement and ferocity of the fighting; the sombre silence of the battlefield after the cease-fire has blown—"War's Peace". Best of all are the episodes which give most scope to Griffith's response to the tender human affections, never more memorably than in the return from war of the only surviving Cameron son: the shabby, hesitating figure at the gate, his naively happy sister on the steps, pathetic in her mock finery, the look between them which suddenly brings home to her all that they have lost, and the final exquisite reticence of the boy's entry into the house, welcomed in by his mother's arms.

But *The Birth of a Nation*, like another celebrated epic of the American Civil War, has a second part; and, again like *Gone With*



Up roar at a Brains Trust : "Folly to be Wise." Martita Hunt, Alistair Sim, Roland Culver, Colin Gordon, Elizabeth Allan.

the *Wind*, this latter half is a let-down. (For different reasons certainly). There is no point in re-flogging the old controversy of Griffith's racial prejudices: he was a Southerner by birth and conviction, as traditional in his hates as in his loves. His picture of the South after the war is an inflamed and a bitter one; however sincere his theoretical belief in tolerance and equality, he is unable to regard the Negro with anything but the eye of an overlord. Even his "Old Faithfuls" (the name given to the Camerons' loyal Negro servants) are white actors in blackface, and the approval accorded to their behaviour on the titles is not reflected in any real respect or affection in their presentation. The climax of the film is a stylistic *tour de force*, but its amalgam of traditional, stagey melodramatics and hysterical racialism is extremely distasteful. The camera is tracking for the first (or the second) time in the history of the cinema; but where to? These hooded figures, whose actions we are so brilliantly being urged to approve; who are they, and what are they doing? Griffith is cross-cutting marvellously; but from what to what, and why? These questions are all part of film appreciation too.

FOLLY TO BE WISE

Reviewed by Daniel Farson

Folly to be Wise is adapted from the play "It Depends What You Mean", and has the advantage of Bridie's wit delivered by Alistair Sim. This above all else sustains the film. Sim's timing is masterful; his control of the part of a jovial, bumbling army chaplain who is made Entertainment Officer, is hilarious and yet consistent. It is a fine, unfaltering comedy creation, admirably directed.

On the whole, however, the transfer of the play to the screen is disappointing. The original subject provides some witty scenes, but it is slight and untidy; neither script (John Dighton and Frank Launder) nor direction (Launder) have taken a positive enough attitude to it. The main incident is a Brains Trust which comes to grief over the question, persistently raised by an A.T.S. girl, of what makes a happy marriage. Though this is funny, it is also interminable, and not helped by static camerawork. To get the point across—the personal havoc caused by this question, the violent washing of dirty linen, in full view of the army audience, of the eccentric local sculptor, his wife and her highbrow "lover", the latter very much in quotation marks—must have been easier on the stage. In the film, one feels, it needs either very subtle or extravagantly imaginative handling. Instead, it is "done straight", in a rather tentative way, and Bridie's lively but erratic and casual stagecraft makes the result distinctly uneasy.

The worst faults of characterisation also stem directly from the play. The local Labour M.P., for example, is an aggressive little man, very Northern and "Bah Gum", full of "the workers" and "the common people"—a hopeless caricature, well off the mark. So, basically, is the twittering Lady Dodd, though she is so

amusingly played by Martita Hunt that one enjoys her, and the maddeningly erudite broadcaster, the "lover".

The sculptor, however, is a richer part, and its opportunities are seized and improved upon by Roland Culver; he, like Sim, is at the top of his form. He is especially entertaining on the platform, with his breakdowns of grief and abuse, his feeble but dramatic efforts to fight his rival, and his personal confessions and revelations to the audience. Elizabeth Allan plays the wife, making a charming return to films. The sober parts of the young man and woman, the chaplain's batman and secretary, are more than adequate, and Miles Malleon brings his usual distinctive touch to the usual small part. But it is Sim and Culver who keep the film going and prevent it from becoming dull—a film made with disconcerting slackness by people from whom we have seen (and continue to expect) better things.

THE THIEF and THE FOURPOSTER

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

The idea of making a non-dialogue film, of manoeuvring characters so that although they collide in violence or intrigue they never meet, as it were, socially, has interesting possibilities. The Clarence Greene-Russell Rouse spy story *The Thief* takes it up on the level of a stunt rather than an experiment, and leaves it there. The obscurely tormented scientist traitor (Ray Milland) trafficks with his fellow agents, hides out in a tenement, murders an F.B.I. man at the top of the Empire State Building and finally gives himself up against some well-chosen location backgrounds and to an accompaniment of unanswered telephone bells, roaring traffic and a slam-bang musical score. The mechanics by which the film side-steps the need for conversation momentarily intrigue, but even a player a good deal more flexible than the conscientious but wooden Ray Milland could make little of the long interludes in which the scientist wanders around his room, smoking cigarettes and registering "inner conflict". A few clever suspense tricks à la Hitchcock in the early stages and some neatly observed minor characters (though the head spy, Martin Gabel, and the lady in the case, Rita Gam, both rather drastically overdo things) help out a none too well sustained thriller whose longueurs seem to confirm that speech has its advantages.

In *The Fourposter*, though, it goes too far. This latest Stanley Kramer production, from Jan de Hartog's play with two characters and one bedroom, pursues its married couple from the heavily coy embarrassments of the wedding night, through a series of confected squabbles—other woman, other man—to a whimsical epilogue in which the now doddering novelist is visited by the ghost of his wife, still talking as hard as ever. The dialogue combines comedy reminiscent of sub-standard Noel Coward with soap opera sentimentalities, and Rex Harrison (relentlessly bright and gay) and Lilli Palmer (inhumanly wise and understanding) never throw away a line of it. Irving Reis has directed in long, long takes and the photography is strangely dismal.

The most promising idea was that of linking the scenes with cartoons from the immensely gifted UPA group; these do not integrate particularly well with the action, but at least one, a fast, witty 'twenties sequence, is brilliantly funny in its own right. For a moment the film seemed worth seeing for this alone, but Mr. de Hartog's own view of the gay 'twenties quickly dispelled the impression, and after this things went from bad to worse.

SOUVENIRS PERDUS (Lost Property)

Reviewed by Elizabeth Russell

Omnibus films tend to fall into two categories: those using the works of one of the master short story writers (de Maupassant, O. Henry, Maugham) and those mustering a scintillating array of stars. It is to the second division that *Souvenirs Perdus* (Studio One) belongs. The scripts of its four episodes seem to have been written primarily to match the personalities of the actors, and the playing consequently sustains a high level, yielding neither surprises nor disappointments. It is just this quality of predictability which proves ultimately most disappointing.

As an artificial linking device, there being no well-known author to present, no studio loyalty to parade, the Lost Property Office was engaged. Introduced with a sense of urgent importance by an English speaking Frenchman, the fact of the existence of the Lost Property Office is established beyond all doubt. The camera prowls round it and pounces on the most unlikely object, a small

Egyptian figure clothed in a ballet skirt. How did this come to be here? And we are off to the department of Egyptology at the Louvre, where Pierre Brasseur is touting pornographic postcards. Between each story the film returns to the Lost Property Office, a rather irritating device, since the episodes would have been just as effective without the emphasis on a particular object.

As for the stories, they provide in turn sentimental comedy drama, sentimental comedy, melodrama and farce. It is in the last episode that the film achieves most originality. Suzy Delair as the provincial girl friend, improbably sophisticated, who, believing her lover (Francois Perier) to be dead, mourns extravagantly at his apartment while he is taking a bath and desperately seeking to elude her, and later at the wrong funeral, is here provided with a situation which stimulates her natural talents.

Such support from the script is unfortunately lacking in the other episodes. Edwige Feuillere and Pierre Brasseur manage to instil some feeling into a shallow story of a woman who re-encounters her former lover on Christmas Eve; both pretend to be rich, but as the evening wears on they drop the pretence, only to part again at dawn. Edwige Feuillere gives yet another performance, here in cameo form, of the maturely beautiful, disillusioned yet philosophical woman—a part which she plays to experienced perfection.

Bernard Blier follows as a simple, sentimental policeman in a pleasant, unmemorable trifle. He courts a widow by flattering her young son's violin playing, and loses her to a street musician (Yves Montand), a bolder admirer.

Conventional presentation almost ruins the story of the escaped homicidal maniac who prevents a young girl from committing suicide, only to put an end to her life himself. Compression of the action in this episode runs the risk of bringing it near to farce, though Gérard Philipe and, in an unrewarding part, Danièle Delorme, play with a delicacy of feeling that lifts it some way above the inanities of the script. The director, Christian Jaque, has been content to serve up the stories in a straightforward, workmanlike fashion, but the all-star cast might have been better employed.

IN BRIEF

THE PICKWICK PAPERS (Renown). "That the Society of the *Pickwick Club* is requested to forward from time to time authenticated accounts of their journeys, and investigations, their observations, etc." Such episodic, if fascinating, material presents the adaptor with a handful of obstacles. And if the purist Dickensians are disappointed by the omission of favourite characters or scenes, this is inevitable; Noel Langley, the scenarist and director, has done as expert a job of adaptation as one could hope for. This is probably the most difficult of Dickens' novels to film, and at least it has been given form and continuity.

The first half might be called *Pickwick and Co. versus Jingle*. This opens the door at once to a gallery of familiars—Pickwick,

Winkle, Tupman, Snodgrass, the Wardles, the Fat Boy—and such episodes as Winkle (James Donald) having to ride a horse and fight a duel, for the honour of the Sporting Pickwick Club, without the least idea of how to do it. But once the case of *Pickwick and Co. versus Bardell* begins, the reforming spirit of Dickens comes into play, and changes the scene to the tragedy and squalor of a debtors' prison. Here the film has not enough to equal the passion and authenticity of Dickens on this ground.

The cast is packed with accomplished performers, and makes an interesting study of the invisible line which separates actors who caricature a comedy part and those who can genuinely create one. In the last category, Nigel Patrick's Mr. Jingle most notably falls; James Hayter's Mr. Pickwick, which has some excellent moments, seems on the whole to tread both sides; and Harry Fowler's Sam Weller, unfortunately, is on the wrong side all the time. Noel Langley's direction is always competent, the period detail is solid and careful, and *The Pickwick Papers* offers a worthwhile try at something that is, in the last resort, intractable.—Clarissa Bowen.

WHAT PRICE GLORY (Fox). The story is reputedly told of a conversation between Ford and Capra shortly after the last war. Capra was nervous: "What are you going to do about subjects? Where are the stories?" If Ford had any doubts, he concealed them: "If you can't find new stories," he replied, "remake your old ones. The great thing is to be down there on the set at 8 o'clock every morning. The great thing is to keep on making pictures". So much for the genesis of *What Price Glory*. This remake, not of one of Ford's own pictures, but of Raoul Walsh's highly successful 1927 version of the play by Maxwell Anderson and Lawrence Stallings, was commissioned by 20th Century-Fox and produced for them by Sol C. Siegel. It turns out a peculiar hotch-potch, reminiscent in its mingling of humour and sentiment, knockabout and sentimentality, of *Tobacco Road*. But here the elements are far from coalescing into a poetic whole: the dated material is just no longer acceptable. The re-creations of Flagg and Quirt by James Cagney and Dan Dailey are energetic but short on charm; jolly Corinne Calvert does her best as the legendary Charmaine, but it was a mistake to sentimentalise the character; and in these days of universal realism the studio battleground and the lath-and-plaster French village cannot convince. Yet the film has its qualities. It is sometimes funny, and occasionally stirring; there is none of that pervasive deadness which afflicts so many Hollywood films nowadays. The use of colour (camerawork by Joe MacDonald) is refreshingly non-pastel, and often most dramatic: image and accent throughout, in fact, bear the old master's ineffaceable print. And at least he has made as short shrift as possible of the producers' idea that the film should be turned into a musical: romantic as ever about the profession of arms, Ford is as incapable of glamourising it as he is, fundamentally, of kidding it. There is nothing "cold war" about his *What Price Glory*.—Lindsay Anderson.

"Gala Festival": a scene from *Swan Lake*. This new Soviet film, made up of excerpts from opera and ballet, also includes scenes from *Prince Igor*, from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (with Ulanova as Juliet) and from *Ivan Susasin*. The director is Vera Stroyeva.



HOLLYWOOD'S ANTI-RED BOOMERANG

Apple Pie, Love and Endurance versus The Commies

Karel Reisz

The Western world has never been very adept at propaganda, and it was not as propaganda but as entertainment that most of the films in which Hollywood has concerned itself with the cold war were conceived. But on such a subject every statement, of the dangers to be fought, of the values to be supported, is bound to be propagandist. Against the dynamic, growing force of Communism, Hollywood, as powerful a shaper of public opinion as any in the western world, has put up the weakest of counter attacks. Few of the films discussed in Karel Reisz's article have been shown to the Press. Attention is drawn to them because we believe that, to the audiences of Europe, if not to those of America, they defeat their own ends, do positive damage to the cause they are designed to serve. And when the cause is so great, the damage is correspondingly severe.

This article, in which I want to discuss some recent American films concerned with the Cold War, was originally planned for the autumn issue of SIGHT & SOUND. I wanted to comment on the changing character of Hollywood's recent war films and to describe the few isolated excursions behind the Iron Curtain. I mention this because the last six months have seen a sudden and disturbing change: there are today more than three times as many films concerned more or less directly with communism and a well defined cycle, consistent in its aggressive and ignorant over-simplification of international political issues, has emerged. What is chiefly alarming about these films is not that they should have been made, but that they are shown in Western Europe, where audiences are bound to take them as representing the current American attitude to the East-West conflict. They are, of course, not designed as public relations jobs for the United States, but that is, in effect, what they are. As political propaganda films like *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (and the rest discussed below) are much more damaging to the Western cause in Europe than *The Fall of Berlin*.

The attack began on the foreign front with *The Iron Curtain* and has since been maintained by films like *Treason* and *The Red Danube*. To the more playful films in this group little objection can be raised. *Peking Express* and *Diplomatic Courier*—both adapted from originals not mentioning the red menace—are spy stories converted to present demands. You have to have secrets, and enemies to take them from, in a spy story, and *Diplomatic Courier*

simply chooses the obvious enemy and the most topical secret—Tyrone Power, you'll remember, uncovers the Russian plans for the invasion of Yugoslavia. The script assumes that all communists are wicked—many of the actors who used to play *Gauleiters* are happily back at work—and proceeds to tell its old-fashioned romance on that assumption: it is certainly not remarkable, but harmless enough fun.

Most of the other films are not quite so innocuous. *Treason* is a shoddy little B-picture using the iniquitous device employed by Soviet (and Nazi) propaganda films of making actors impersonate public figures, and presents its preposterous story as fact. It puts forward the thesis that Cardinal Mindszenty was hypnotised during his trial—only one of the explanations advanced—without any attempt at providing factual evidence. *The Red Danube* deals with certain incidents in Vienna which at one time hit the headlines; it can speak for itself through a plot synopsis: see Exhibit A. *The Iron Curtain* reconstructs the notorious Canadian spy trials and turns them into the background for a thriller. These films distort, in some cases seriously, the facts on which they are based, but probably no more than *A Song to Remember* distorted the life of Chopin. Their irresponsibility is applied to subjects which demand more serious treatment, but is of a kind one has come to expect from Hollywood. On the whole, they are too unimportant to arouse much anger or protest, particularly since none of them is as blatantly dishonest as, say, the Soviet *Secret Mission*.



Forces of good—Left to right, nun and stalwart major (or love), Ethel Barrymore and Walter Pidgeon in "The Red Danube"; F.B.I. man (endurance) cleaning up the reds in Hawaii, John Wayne in "Big Jim McLain"; and Helen Hayes (apple-pie) as the mother who persuades her communist son to recant in "My Son John".



Forces of evil—the commies. Left to right: ice-cold American party intellectual (Louisa Horton in “Crime of the Century”), Moscow agents tuning into American conversations with Mars (“Red Planet Mars”), and an emigre spy in the U.S.A. (“Crime of the Century”).

The more numerous films about communism within the United States are another matter.

II

The good old days when Sam Spade and Nick Charles made their forays into the gangster underworld because their hearts were vaguely in the right place, and they enjoyed the fun and women they could collect on the way, are, it seems, gone for ever. The great individualist sleuths have been replaced by the policeman with a mission. The new streamlined product, the location thriller, has replaced the dark shadows with ‘realism’, the spirit of adventure with a social conscience: where Marlow’s business was, simply, ‘trouble’, the F.B.I. man’s is reform. An enjoyable tradition has been frittered away. Nowadays the hero of a thriller has to be a crusader—against social injustice, racial prejudice, suppression of a free press or, as in *Thunder in the East*, for the more dubious cause of converting a saintly, Gandhi-like passive resistance leader to the glories of the knife and machine-gun. (The last, admittedly, had moments of the genuine old anarchic verve.) The fact that an increasing number of these entertainments deals with social issues is, of itself, neither a good or bad thing. The pity is that in acquiring a social conscience, the films have become duller and have, in most cases, failed to match their high intentions with a corresponding honesty of treatment.

Now that Hollywood’s fight against communism is definitely on, a number of stock stories have been quickly adapted to the new cause. *The Enemy Within* (in America, *The Red Menace*), *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.*, *Big Jim McLain*, *Crime of the Century* (in America, *Walk East on Beacon*), all have the familiar ingredients and fall naturally into the new thriller genre; *Whip Hand* and *The Woman on Pier 13* have obvious affinities with it. All of them are full of contemporary references (an actor impersonated Gerhardt Eisler in *I Was a Communist*) and make great play with the glamorous paraphernalia of F.B.I. investigation—elaborately cross-indexed files, photostats, microphones and microscopes, all presented in authentic, ‘documentary’ manner. Yet these films are not so much attacks on communism employing a melodramatic framework—in the sense that, say, *Intruder in the Dust* was a plea for racial tolerance—but thrillers in which the anti-communist element has been introduced as an extra, up-to-date treat for the customers. The distinction, as we shall see, is of some significance, for the propaganda these films offer is unsystematic and incidental to their main function as

entertainments—no match at all in thoroughness and calculation to the films which have poured out of the East in the last four or five years. Since they are primarily commercial productions, their irresponsibility is, in a sense, as much fortuitous as intentional: they are mostly cheaply made routine shockers (of which only one has been press shown); and they betray no real animosity against the communist political system, only the dutifully executed smears that are regularly accorded to gangsters in a B-picture. One feels in many cases that a studio’s old thriller properties have been converted into topical patriotic documents by the simple device of calling the hoodlums of the original story ‘commies’. The only direct crusading done is an occasional aside supporting the work of the Un-American Activities Committee, and *Big Jim McLain* comes out with an attack on the Fifth Amendment.

The plots of these films conform to a surprisingly standard pattern—see Exhibit B. Cumulatively, they put forward the following contentions about the enemy:

(i) The American Communist Party is run by a gang of cheap though diabolically clever crooks, distinguishable from other hoodlums only in that their boss lives in the Kremlin. The leaders are in close touch with Moscow (“... the North Koreans are about to cross the border in a couple of days. Our policy will be to criticise the military leadership, demoralise the people...” says one in *I Was a Communist*) and are openly contemptuous of native party members—witness the following dialogue in *Big Jim McLain*:

Party Boss: These domesticated, dedicated party members make me sick.

Party Stogie: But we need them.

Party Boss: ... until we take over.

Party Stogie: Then—liquidate them.

Communists are prepared to kill a man in order to demonstrate their methods to a valuable wavering comrade (*The Woman on Pier 13*) or for asking awkward questions at a study meeting (*The Enemy Within*); and they are willing to keep a huge sanatorium full of human guinea-pigs on whom to experiment with germs (*Whip Hand*). They go about their butchery in a cold, calculating way, displaying no emotion or guilt. On the other hand they sometimes openly boast of their feats: “Trotzky thought he’d get away—but we got him. Jan Masaryk was dropped out of a window—suicide they called it...” (*I Was a Communist*).

(ii) Communists are hard, intellectual people, many of them cold-blooded scientists: in the same way as they are not supposed to be sentimental about killing enemies, they

are also not expected to form personal attachments (married couples invariably leave the Party in the last reel). When a communist girl falls in love, the boss explains what is happening: "Love! Why don't you call it what it is—emotion!" (*Woman on Pier 13*). Occasionally, as a discipline, a party member is made to undertake officially an act which will prove his personal detachment. In *Whip Hand*, when a girl has to be disposed of, the job is entrusted to her brother. When he hesitates—"You'll do as you're told!" The following lines of dialogue occur with minor variations in four of the films:

Party Girl: (In love and therefore deviating): Don't worry about my private life.

Party Boss: You have no private life.

(iii) In one way or another, all communists are neurotic. Their women get crushes on young men, some are psychopathic killers, all neglect their mothers. Being thus abnormal, their great aim is to get clean, upstanding young Americans into the Party—the kind they rarely get, or if they do, are betrayed by. Many communists are pathologically vain and have 'martyr complexes': when, in *The Iron Curtain*, one is about to be taken to prison, another reassures him: "Don't be too unhappy, Keith. We'll name a city after you when we take over."

(iv) There are only three ways a normal, honest person can become a communist. He may be temporarily discontented by some social injustice—the treatment of returning soldiers, for instance. He may be a Jew or a negro—if so,

the film will patronise him and he will leave in the last reel. Or, most reliably, his clean animal instincts may let him down: the heroes of *Woman on Pier 13* and *The Enemy Within* are brought into the organisation by communist seductresses (of whom the Party seems to have an inexhaustible supply), others are tempted in by the evident easy virtue of communist women. Occasionally the seductress herself falls in love; in that case she is either promptly killed or received into the Church.

(v) Communists are closely allied to fascists, many having come over from the Bund. They are violently anti-semitic and anti-negro and privately joke about the dupes who join the Party: "The niggers ate it up" says a speaker to a fellow comrade after a meeting (*I Was a Communist*); "Wasting our time on those African savages" sneers another when a negro has defected (*The Enemy Within*).

(vi) Communists are rich, do their work for private gain or to satisfy a power mania. They live in large, luxurious flats with suspect modernistic furniture (but the larder is always a photographic dark room) and large libraries, eat off silver plates and openly look forward to the age of caviare for the commissar. "Some day we won't have to worry about dough. A commissar gets everything for free—everything!" (*Crime of the Century*).

(vii) To get money, communists organise blind campaigns and keep the cash for themselves. In *I Was a Communist* an ex-Bund member is told to reassemble his fascist group so that the Party can raise money to suppress it. Another

EXHIBIT A

The Red Danube

Colonel M. S. "Hooky" Nicobar, D.S.O., M.C. (Walter Pidgeon) and Major John "Twingo" McPhimister, D.S.O., M.C. (Peter Lawford) are sent to Vienna to supervise the repatriation of displaced Russian citizens. They are under the command of a foolish, cantankerous old Blimp, and Hooky is later replaced by Colonel Humphrey "Blinker" Omicron, played by Francis L. Sullivan. (So much for the Limeys—they are all a huge joke: the only one to command any kind of respect is Hooky for whom Pidgeon does not attempt to disguise his American accent). Being billeted in a nunnery, they come under the surveillance of the Mother Superior (Ethel Barrymore, becomingly hooded) and Twingo immediately notices a mysterious girl, Maria (Janet Leigh), who comes to the nunnery for advice.

Hooky, we now learn, is a tough egg, unconventional, with an arm shot off in the war ("Where d'ye get that empty sleeve?" asks a fellow officer, very Noel Coward) and, of course, embittered: he does not believe in God, is a stickler for army rules, a shrewd lad. When a nun tells him that St. Barbara of Graz, the nunnery's founder, once flew to see the Pope and adds that this was in the 16th century, Hooky smiles, knowing better.

Twingo falls in love with Maria but it turns out that she is a Russian prima ballerina, sought by the Soviet authorities. When Colonel Piniev asks Hooky to send her to the Russian zone ("She is wanted personally by Comrade Stalin to dance again at the Bolshoi Theatre"), Hooky, obeying orders, hands her over. Twingo is heartbroken as he watches her being brutally herded away in a Russian transport among lorry-loads of children and old people.

On Christmas day, Hooky is having a chat with the Mother Superior, explaining why he is an atheist. She is all smiles and patty-fingers in the Holy Water and begins to win him over a little. Then the news comes that a Russian transport has arrived in the British zone full of refugees and they go to inspect it. Up to this point the film has been energetically cheerful and comic, occasionally punctuated by a piece of Russian bestiality. Now, suddenly, the tone changes: we see a sequence staged realistically and with some conviction, of cattle-trucks full of old, starving people, praying, muttering, clutching young infants, freezing to death. Maria is among them.

Hooky: (To a Russian officer): You've had these people sent back into the British zone because they're too young or too old to be of use in slave labour camps.

Mother Superior: Merry Christmas Lieutenant! Oh!—I forgot: you Russians don't believe in Christmas.

Hooky makes arrangements to smuggle Maria into the country and dictates a violent memorandum to U.N.O. demanding a revision of the repatriation laws. Piniev arrives again, asking for Maria, but this time Hooky refuses to help. Piniev accuses him of not speaking the truth.

Hooky: The Truth! If you'd told your people that British and American soldiers died to bring you Russians arms to defeat the Germans...

A British General arrives from London and books a special plane to take Hooky to the War Office. The Mother Superior asks him to drop her off at Rome ("to see His Holiness about the talk we had the other night") but this is difficult as she has no priority booking. When they reach the plane it turns out that Hooky has mistakenly taken the General's overcoat (the Mother Superior appropriates this accident as a miracle) and he manages to wangle her on to the plane. Now follow these dialogues:

On the plane:

Mother Superior: How high are we flying?

Hooky: About 10,000 feet.

Mother Superior: (Over-trumping): Our Holy Founder, St. Barbara of Graz, flew at 20,000.

Just before landing:

Mother Superior: How long did it take us to fly here?

Hooky: Three hours.

Mother Superior: (Trumping an ace): Our Holy Founder St. Barbara of Graz only took two hours.

On landing:

Hooky: I hope you get His Holiness to talk turkey.

Mother Superior: (With a gigantic wink): He'll talk turkey all right.

When they meet next:

Mother Superior: His Holiness talked turkey. The Church has been talking turkey for centuries.

Returning from London, Hooky anticipates a change in U.N.O. policy any day and refuses to hand over Maria to Piniev. For this he is put on a charge and Maria is fetched. Rather than surrender she throws herself out of a window. Around her death-bed, Hooky and Twingo watch while the Mother Superior helps her to make her peace with God. She does and dies. In the background stands Piniev, silent, furious, defeated.

The General arrives again from London, commends Hooky on his initiative, dismisses the charge and promotes him "to humanize the army" ("... and what a clever idea of yours to take the old Mother Superior for a chinwag with the Pope"). The new U.N.O. directive comes through and Hooky, reconciled with Twingo, moves off to another unit.



Two picturesque moments. Left, communist doctors breeding germs to poison the U.S.A. in "Whip Hand"; right, meeting of the sabotage gang in Britain's "High Treason".

openly confesses that 2,000,000 dollars were raised for the Scottsboro' boys and only 65,000 used to help them. Not that most communists really need the money—they are frequently very successful people: interior decorators, big steel magnates, ace photographers on glossy magazines.

(viii) Once you are a member of the Communist Party it is impossible to get out. The communists will blackmail you for ever—the plot of *Woman on Pier 13* is based on this assumption—by sending photostats of your Party card to your new employers or by having you deported. But if you go to the F.B.I. all will be forgiven.

In execution, most of the films bear all the marks of the B-picture—blaring music, bad continuity and acting, arbitrary passages of violence: the riot scenes in *I Was a Communist* are some of the most brutal ever filmed and the hero of *The Woman on Pier 13* kills the communist in the last reel by jabbing a meat-hook into his heart. What makes these meretricious trimmings particularly objectionable is that they are attached to themes which demand serious treatment. Though obscured by ludicrous fabrication and bad script-writing, most of the contentions the films make about communists are distantly based on observed practice: communists in fact *do* violently denounce their stray sheep, *do* attract and exploit racial minorities, *do* organise fake campaigns. These things are worth reporting honestly and are 'dramatic' enough not to need the routine hoodlum patter. The chief objection to films like *The Enemy Within* is that in passing American society through a wringer in order to squeeze out the Communist poison, they simultaneously tear the fabric of the decent, democratic values they are supposed to protect. And there is a practical objection, too: they make anti-communism a kind of game which, being played to the rules of the penny dreadful, no one can take seriously.

If the films under consideration were shown only to American audiences one would hesitate to raise these objections. But to audiences in Western Europe the the East-West conflict is no game and the threat to the democratic values is direct and real. It is here that these films by their lack of serious contact with contemporary reality and their assertion of values which on this side of the Atlantic look more than a little ridiculous, must do great harm to their professed cause.

III

References to the cold war have lately invaded many other fields of Hollywood entertainment, however remote from the world of international politics. Scientifiction has been

brought into the battle—the lunatic excesses of *Red Planet Mars* were described in the last number of *SIGHT AND SOUND*; *Our Lady of Fatima* asserts that the Madonna foresaw the red menace thirty-five years ago; even Czarist Russia comes in for some harsh treatment in the historical romances *The World in His Arms* and *Californian Conquest*; and the makers of *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* felt obliged to interject an arbitrary smear on Republican Spain. These asides, often interjected quite at random, somehow echo the latent political hysteria of Hollywood even more strongly than the directly political films. They sometimes give the uncomfortable impression of being the work of film-makers who for private reasons are trying to make public avowals of their reliability.

Nowhere is this sense of hysteria more strongly felt than in recent war films—the field in which the climate of the cold war has blown its most blood-freezing winds.

The period of respite following on the 1939-45 war, in which audiences did not want to see films about fighting, did not last long. As soon as the conflict between East and West began to crystallise and the daily news began to anticipate another war, fighting films returned. Old ones which had been caught in the slump (*Back to Bataan*, *A Walk in the Sun*) were dusted off for release and soon a new batch arrived. From the relative decency of *Twelve o'clock High* and *Battleground* the standard has degenerated to the level of *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Submarine Command*, *Halls of Montezuma*, *The Frogmen*, *Flying Leathernecks*, *Thunder Across the Pacific*—and the stream continues, gaining momentum, getting bloodier.

There is a subtle difference between films made during and after a war. The former usually have a sense of urgency, a sense of the importance of military victory that the post-war films lack. All the above films hark back to a war whose outcome is already known, and *The Steel Helmet*, the first film about Korea, covers a war in which neither side appears to aim at outright military victory. This lack of ultimate suspense is compensated for by a new approach to the business of fighting. The topic of these films is heroism, the issue is what produces it. The aim is to demonstrate an efficient fighting machine, and to investigate the conditions which make a hero. A 'Reader's Digest' kind of psychology is substituted for emotional identification, cowards are 'cured' by a bit of honest shell-fire, moral considerations are never even raised. A recurring figure in these films is the tough commander, hated by his men, ruthless in his conduct of individual manoeuvres. Everyone hates him until the last reel, when he is judged by results: he has imposed unpopular (and often ethically dubious) decisions

on his men—but, in victory, they come to love him. The commissar principle is endorsed.

Military details themselves have become more and more gory in recent films. A whole reel of *Thunder Across the Pacific* has the crew of an aircraft in closely dwelled-on blood-soaked bandages, and the pilot, at one point, speaks of his B.29 Super Fortress in the fond terms of a lover wooing his mistress: of his union in battle with his machine, he says, "... in her sweet belly she carries ten tons of fire". In *One Minute to Zero*, according to a report in "Time", Robert Mitchum orders the shelling of a column of civilian refugees which he suspects of containing guerillas. (The Department of Defence are said to have objected to the scene but the producers refused to remove it.) Again, the hero of *The Steel Helmet*, finding two Korean guerillas whom he has shot to be still breathing, calmly lifts his rifle and crushes in their faces with the butt.

It is important to be clear what exactly it is one objects to in a sequence of this kind. Incidents like it will surely occur in a war, and many soldiers, subjected to the stress of battle, would act in the way shown. Some, as one cannot help feeling is the case in *The Steel Helmet*, might even enjoy it. But to show the episode on the screen and to build the perpetrator into a hero on the strength of this and similar acts is another matter: it is, in effect, to give a moral *carte blanche* to the savage.

One only has to go to a cinema nowadays and observe the audience reacting to the newsreel from Korea to realise that there is a market for this kind of film. But is the thuggish tone of *Thunder Across the Pacific* really essential to a war film's commercial success? *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *They Were Expendable* and *A Walk in the Sun* as well as the British war films, *They Were Not Divided* and *Angels One Five*,

whatever their respective merits, have proved successful without surrendering their humane standards. It is the joy in war, the wholehearted acceptance of fighting as a desirable and admirable occupation, expressed by the recent Hollywood war films, that is open to protest. The blood-thirsty tone they adopt and the human values they assert invalidate any purpose that may be claimed for them.

IV

While *Thunder Across the Pacific* and the rest keep war constantly before our eyes, Sam Goldwyn's *I Want You* goes one step further by being in effect a recruiting film. It demonstrates concisely the crucial problem of all anti-communist film propaganda—the definition of the Western democratic values in terms sufficiently striking to serve as an effective alternative. *I Want You* attempts to do this in typical Goldwyn manner when Dana Andrews, showing us round his little old home town, comes to introduce us to his mother. He does it with classic simplicity: "And that's mother. Her specialities?—apple-pie, love and endurance." This, the film effectively implies, is what is at stake in Korea—mom's right to stay that way.

Goldwyn's film is not unique in its offer of the simple homely virtues as the alternative to the commies. The mother in *The Enemy Within* makes the same point and so does the relationship between father and son in *I Was a Communist*. Gilbert Seldes, writing in "The Saturday Review of Literature" of *My Son John* (not yet seen here) sums up the young communist's guilt: "His capital offence is that he wants to cut the silver cord between him and his mother... the crime is virtually matricide." A number of other films, not directly connected with the communists, have recently

EXHIBIT B

The Enemy Within

A communist agent sidles up to Bill Jones, an army veteran who has been swindled out of his gratuity by a phoney estate agent, and takes him to "a club for discriminating people". This is in fact a communist recruiting base in which trained Party members await likely prey. Mollie O'Flaherty, a flirtatious young floozie who has been sitting with Henry Salamon, an intense young Jewish communist poet, immediately leaves him to vamp Bill. In the background, watching, sits the ferocious, muscular comrade Yvonne.

The agent reports about Bill to party headquarters ("Promise him anything. When he gets into the Party he'll soon discover it's not so easy to get out") and Bill himself goes round to Mollie's flat. She gives him the standard Party line and they kiss. Then, her seducing done, she gives him a good book to read—*The Coming Dawn*. Mollie's mother enters, heart-broken over her daughter's rejection of the Church. "What's the matter ma—didn't your cheque come?" counters Mollie, a stone. But when ma leaves there are tears in Mollie's eyes...

At a communist protest meeting Nina Petrovka is assigned to look after Bill. She is a professional European communist able to organise a riot by dropping a hint or two in the right places ("I'll have some students and professors there"). When the police arrive she runs off with Bill and she, too, quickly bewitches him. When he asks her for a date, she suggests tomorrow—at a Marxist study meeting.

At the study group, the formidable Yvonne is in the chair. She shouts, bangs, and, in front of a group of recruits, gives away secrets about the organisation that *The Daily Worker* would blush to print. When challenged by a young Italian worker for not quite speaking the truth, she bellows: "There is only one truth. The truth of communism as laid down by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin". When the Italian finds this catchy little slogan an unsatisfactory answer, he is called a dago, taken out by Party officials and beaten to death. Nina watches the beating up and is perturbed; Yvonne watches her and reports her lack of relish in the proceedings to the bosses: "She wouldn't be the first foreign communist that got a crush on Uncle Sam."

Father Leary now comes to see Mollie to reclaim her to the

fold. He is a wise man and terribly human: "Confidentially—sermons bore me. Even my own". And he proceeds to preach a long one: "America is a melting pot of many nationalities... etc". He gets much the best of the argument.

We now witness a meeting of the communist central committee (Bill, unaccountably, is present) called to reprimand comrade Salamon for writing a deviationist poem for "The Toilers". It appears that American communists believe Marx's thought to be "entirely original" and that Salamon, by mentioning Hegel, has transgressed. Cornered, Salamon speaks: "I thought I could be an American liberal and a communist... I've found this committee to be composed of psychopathic misfits, seeking an outlet for their frustrations". ("Traitor! Trotzkite!" hisses Yvonne). Salamon is expelled and persecuted by the Party till he commits suicide; as a last gesture he writes a note to Mollie advising her to seek out Father Leary—which she does.

Bill tells Nina he is ready to become a full communist. She, her character suddenly switched, is disappointed: "I came to America to fight for people's rights but I found everyone here had everything we say we're fighting for". They kiss and decide to run for it (though a few lines earlier Bill had wanted to become a communist).

Now comes an arbitrary little cadenza proving that communists are neurotic. Yvonne, coming home one night, is taken in by the Immigration Office for a routine check-up. It transpires that Yvonne Krauss went to Mexico some years ago and while her papers are now in order, the authorities smell something fishy. Yvonne obligingly gives them the facts. She goes into a sort of trance of wish-fulfilment: "Yes, Yvonne Krauss is dead. They killed Yvonne Krauss in Mexico". (There are sounds of drums and marching soldiers). "Yvonne Krauss is dead. You are talking to Commissar Blok!". (The marching boots come nearer). "You're too late! The revolution has come! They'll be here! They'll take your jobs!" And in a violent ecstasy of power lust, she roars with laughter, screams and has to be taken out hysterical. "Psychopathic" diagnoses the Immigration Officer quietly.

Bill and Nina meanwhile have fled the town and give themselves up at a small country sheriff's office. They tell him all and he forgives them. Leaving the station, they meet a small boy and ask for the sheriff's name. "We kids call him Uncle Sam".



Dwelling on violence. Wounded heroes in "Thunder Across the Pacific", and a cop breaking up a communist-inspired strike in "I was a Communist etc., etc."

appeared to plug the American Way of Life along similar lines. The superstitious nonsense of *The Next Voice You Hear* and the patronising smugness of *Our Very Own* and *It's a Big Country*—these are the pictures of America that Hollywood has been sending out to the world. And there is a juxtaposition in *The Iron Curtain* which accidentally sums up what these films have to offer by way of standards. When the Russian embassy official has decided to go over to the Canadian authorities, the commentary takes over: "Gouzenko and his wife discovered that the Canadians are a happy people. . . ." Under this we see the couple strolling past a church and then into a ritzy night-spot, half lit, with couples dancing. One dreads to think what 'Pravda' can do with a little touch like that.

It is difficult from this side of the Atlantic to be more than amused and a little exasperated by the rosy, elaborately ritualistic domesticity of these films, where mom is in charge and Uncle Joe is doing all those terrible mean things simply to spite her. Equally, it is hard to know how seriously the Americans take it (how seriously, after all, do we take the equivalent Gladys Henson-Jack Warner *menage*?) Yet in films like *I Want You* the private domestic virtues are offered as the antidote to communism—a function for which they

are hardly suited. The larger political issues lend themselves uneasily to discussion in terms of family squabbles. Apple-pie is nice and mother-love a good thing (though don't Russian mothers love their children?) but these things do not seriously shake the foundations of world communism. The approach of *I Want You* is, in fact, a showman's hoax, an attempt, no doubt subconscious, to sidetrack the real issues by dangling an attractive picture of domestic bliss before the spectator.

Only the Roman Catholic films offer a more relevant antithesis to communism. *The Red Danube*, *The Enemy Within* and *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* have a great advantage over the other films in that they subscribe to a creed which can be defined in concrete terms without looking silly. They offer, besides, a rigid set of values which give the films an aptness and incisiveness that *I Want You* and the rest conspicuously lack.

While the Catholic films try to reserve the cosy wisdom elsewhere accorded to mother for their priests, they are disturbing in another way—in their cavalier approach to all things intellectual. In *My Son John*, according to reports, the erring communist son returns to his father in

(Continued on page 148)



Left, the standard party blonde keeping watch on a potential defaulter (June Havoc and Dana Andrews in "The Iron Curtain"); right, Hawaiian communists with modernistic furniture In "Big Jim McLain".



Watched by a group of Federal employees in Washington, D.C., during a luncheon hour break, producer Clarence Greene confers with Ray Milland.



On location at the top of New York's Empire State Building, director Russell Rouse sets up a shot.

Background for *The Thief*

Clarence Greene and Russell Rouse

The desire to make full use of the visual qualities of the motion picture medium inspired the making of *The Thief*, and from its conception some years ago to its recent fruition, we laboured with the thought in mind of making a speechless movie that would be entertaining, tell a definitive story and at the same time be completely understandable to all audiences.

We trust we have succeeded in these goals.

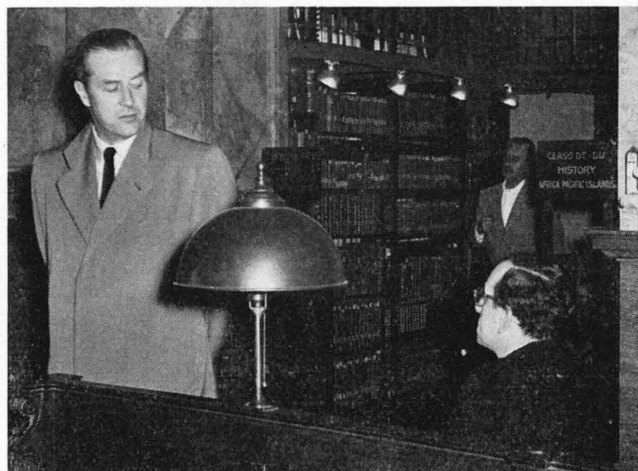
In Ray Milland we felt we had the ideal choice for our leading player. We needed an actor who could convey by a movement, a gesture or a turn of his body the expression we wanted made known to the audience, and we were confident that Milland could fill our requirements. Our admiration for this fine technician is boundless.

Speaking from the cinematography viewpoint, the camera had to become itself a dramatic element, actually taking part in the action, and not just remain a piece of photo machinery. All of our moves had to be so planned that the camera was telling the story as well as showing the action it was at the same moment committing to film. For example, in the first half of the picture, the camera angles, and for that matter, the whole manipulation of the camera, were from low angles. This conveys to the audience psychologically the visual effect of the man (Ray Milland) who has not yet become a fugitive. He was still actually free, as well as being photographically free. Once he becomes a fugitive, however, and the story moves to New York, we trained our camera at eye-level or even higher. In this way, we kept him repressed visually and he became a thief being pursued. The audience and this man together become joint victims of claustrophobia. We shot from the point of view of the ceiling to further increase this effect, for the angles become distorted and one is bound to compare himself to a caged rat, seeking egress to the outside, free world.

As we felt authenticity of backgrounds were an absolute necessity to preserve the feeling of reality, most of our shooting was done on actual locations in New York and Washington. Before the picture began shooting, however, we had made two trips to these cities from Hollywood and had all our set-ups arranged beforehand. As many of our set-ups involved use of hidden-camera, there was certainly no

The scientist (Ray Milland) awaits an agent about to contact him: National Capitol as background.

An interesting and novel experiment, *The Thief* is a film without dialogue. A spy story with a chase framework, it is told entirely in the visuals, accompanied by a music score and sound effects. Its makers, who introduce it here, are talented people, both aged 36, who have previously collaborated on *The Well*. Greene is the writer and producer, Rouse directs and collaborates on the script.



The scientist and the agent (Martin Cabel, right) meet in the Library of Congress. Extra at back is director Russell Rouse

time to go back and "shoot it again" if we missed our opportunity the first time. It is virtually impossible to create that look of complete naturalness in a crowd of extras that it is possible to achieve when you are shooting into a crowd, completely unaware that it is being photographed.

The accompanying stills illustrate various moments in the shooting of the picture in New York, Washington, and at the studio in Hollywood.

Inside the car: no process work was used for the drive through New York City, and camera is mounted at the back.



The Sulky Fire (3)

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED Peter Price

Basil Wright, Stuart Legg, Brian Smith, all experienced documentary film-makers, have contributed to this series and made suggestions for the revitalisation of documentary in this country.

PETER PRICE, member of a younger generation, who may be described as something of a renegade from the older movement, contributes another point of view. He edited and scripted various M.O.I. films during the war, then worked as editor on Bernard Miles' independent feature, "Chance of a Lifetime." He is now with M.S.A., the American government unit, in Paris.

The accepted leaders of documentary have been publicly wondering what is wrong with the documentary movement, as they conceive it. Would it be too brutal to wonder also if some of the trouble doesn't stem from these leaders themselves, and from their present conception of documentary?

For an unfortunate impression they often give is that they now have this tool in their hands and are not quite sure what to do with it. And they're largely the same people who originally forged the tool because they had something very burning to say; to-day the fire is sulky, and the audience is even sulkier.

Audience is the wrong word anyway. Pupils might be nearer the mark, because the urge to teach has always been strong in the movement. And this is only one of the factors that has sent the wagon off the rails. It is easy to understand how the didactic approach arose; but that doesn't excuse the way in which the movement has lost contact with its audience. Nobody, in fact, gives the impression so far of understanding the present mood of the public, much less of regarding the audience's feeling as paramount. This factor is always left to ill-wishers in Wardour Street to point out.

In the 'thirties it may have been good enough (as Brian Smith pointed out in the January—March issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*), to demonstrate on film certain ideas which were "already absorbed by the well-read"; and the public could still be interested in watching how various industrial processes were carried out. But the how-they-do-it technique was adopted by the feature film during the war, at the same time as the liberal ideas were adopted by the general public.

So now, after several years in the nude, it is beginning to get chilly and the hunt is on for a new set of clothes. Brian Smith proposes "humanism", which makes sense as far as it goes, but why does he give the impression of proposing it as the up-and-coming gimmick? The situation calls for more than gimmicks. And he's not one of the traditional leaders, anyway. For a more traditional point of view one must go to Stuart Legg's terrifying article, in which he wants audiences to "face the truth of their changing situation as a whole and to seek its constructive resolution as a whole".

Please, now, just what audience is going to do this? And the rest of the articles are full of phrases like *common interests*, *collective subjects*, *a sense of event*, *constructive forces in the making* . . . it takes you back to the climate of the popular front, and there's a quaint old-fashioned air about it all.

So it is hard not to wonder if the leaders of an avant-garde don't subconsciously hope to stay young and in the swim, tending to cling to the ideas that excited them in their youth and quick to repulse any suggestion that their arteries might be hardening. They don't appear to recognise that in the course of a minor social revolution (which they helped to bring about) people have found that being "progressive" isn't quite enough and that the old phrases about collective subjects don't mean a thing. A whole area of ready faith has gone under wraps, and people are chewing the cud, cultivating their own gardens for a while (and possibly reading the essays of E. M. Forster)—in fact the climate has changed, so the way of stimulating people in a cinema has changed too.

And if documentary is to mean anything again, it must do more than get a new set of clothes and ideals, and more than start caring about its audience. There are some old habits of thinking which one can only hope are not too deeply ingrained.

The chief of these is, "We are social servants first and film makers second". This dogma would do for the factual film, the string of images linked with left-wing statistics, for the film which set out to teach. But the consumer resistance to being taught has killed this sort of film, and must kill the dogma.

Then there is the well known fear of humour and emotion. Once more, this used to be understandable enough while the pioneers were hammering out a pure style, and the audience was flattered (maybe) by a direct appeal to its intelligence. But now it is beginning to look as though documentaries have no laughter or feelings in them, or, if they have, that they are unable to translate them on to the screen.¹ This second interpretation would tie in with their relegation of film-making to second place, and is the most likely explanation. All right, then, it is not their *forte*, but that is no reason for pretending to disapprove on principle of something that their habits of thinking have made impossible for themselves.

Finally, must they indefinitely proclaim their contempt for the commercial cinema? It has always been obvious that it was sour grapes, and in the long run can only degenerate into an even greater contempt for the audience which, after all, *does* go to the commercial cinema and is not necessarily contemptible for doing so.

Let us then not take too much pity on this picture of the spinsterish schoolmistress whose pupils are so bored with her that they won't come to school, so she's trying to think up a new subject to teach because teaching is the only profession she knows. Let her come off it a bit, even take to the streets for a while. It'll do her good. Let her examine her own conscience, and try to lose the habit of wearing it on her sleeve.

Is all this unconstructive? Certainly, but nothing good can come now until documentary ceases to be pre-occupied with the spreading of knowledge and tries to have and spread a little understanding. And before it can do that, it must drop some of its present habits of mind.

In making a film it's much easier to be didactic. It's practically child's play. The coming challenge is thus as much a one of assimilated techniques as of intellectual theories. In the present state of the world statistics teach us little; but an understanding of other people and other ways of living, friend and potential enemy, can help us to understand why people react the way they do.

And this *is* of interest to an audience. The pioneer of this conception of documentary was Flaherty, and he has no obvious successor because documentary has regarded itself as a school rather than as a grouping of individual talents.² And God forbid that his example should be copied literally, for his view of human nature was surely a little overly sentimental. But he was on the right lines, and all we do is pay him lip service.

So down with how they do it, and up with an imaginative understanding of how they are and how it *feels* to do it. Wouldn't it be rather exciting to try to get ahead of the feature film again, and have something worth stealing the next time it loses touch with its audience?

¹Dr. Massingham excepted: whichever way you look at him, he sticks out a mile.

²Paul Dickson excepted: nothing of a school about *David*.

BOOK REVIEWS

SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN. A Biography by Marie Seton. Illustrated. (The Bodley Head, 35/-).

Reviewed by Thorold Dickinson

It can be conceded by now that the three great artist-innovators in cinema are Griffith, Chaplin and Eisenstein, and of the three Eisenstein's contribution is the most important. Griffith made the silent film an art. He turned a method of photographic record into a medium of expression. Chaplin took this medium and used it to reveal human character. Before the sound film brought the human voice to the screen, Chaplin alone created particular individual personalities completely in cinema. For the rest of the movie world action, and in comedy, gags were everything: the people of the screen were types, in movement. For Chaplin action and gags were used to provoke reaction, the exposure of character.

The work of Griffith and Chaplin is primarily concerned with a direct appeal to the emotions. When they used the same methods in attempts to appeal first to the intelligence they bewildered the majority of their audience.

By the time that Eisenstein turned to the cinema in 1924, Griffith's career was in decline and Chaplin had been established for many years as the master of film comedy. Both had won battles against the conventions of commerce. During the next twenty-four years Eisenstein graduated from their experience, whose influence he never failed to acknowledge, and struck out in a new line—the discovery of the intellectual cinema. He battled against the conventions of Bolshevism (the Russian brand of Communism) and, in the long term sense, won his point. Though he lost the battle in material achievement, he won by his influence and his example.

For those in the western world who did not know him personally, the man Eisenstein till now has been an enigma. The English-speaking world never saw his first film *Strike* (1924). Of his five other published films *Potemkin* (1925) is often regarded as the most complete work of film art yet produced. *October* (1928) and *Old and New* (or *The General Line*, 1929) were subsequently withdrawn as one wave of Bolshevik ideology swept over another. These were silent films. His published sound films are *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible Part One* (1945).

Three other films were almost completely photographed (*Que Viva Mexico!* 1932) or edited (*Bezhin Meadow*, 1935 and *Ivan the Terrible Part Two*, 1946). Each provoked shattering controversy which ended in their never being published.

Of his writings two volumes exist: *The Film Sense* (1943) and *Film Form* (1949), and a number of isolated articles.

Now, four years after his death on February 10th 1948, at the age of fifty, a biography has appeared, in some respects the most intimate book about a film personality in the literature of cinema. The enigma is resolved and a fascinating character emerges, developing through a career of opulent tragedy and leaving a mark on the history of cinema that can never be effaced, for one cannot explain cinema without understanding Eisenstein. There is in this life an exposé of the introspective artist of middle class origin and upbringing, learning loyalty to Marxism, torn between his own integrity and the cynical undulations of the Party line, bewildered by capitalist Hollywood and rendered almost senseless by the frustrations he met on his return home—there is, in this life, drama that will grip any reader who is remotely interested in the ideological conflicts of this century.

Marie Seton has tackled the difficult job of analysing, immediately after his death, the life and character of a man with whom she has been closely associated: she does not hesitate to describe their association where such description helps to round off the image which she is recreating. She has interviewed a large number of those who knew him or were mere acquaintances. And she has read everything that has been published by him or about him. There is only one gap in the story, which is to be regretted. While she draws a picture of a man who lived, until his last years, in straitened circumstances, Miss Seton never tells us how much Eisenstein earned or how he managed to live. There can be no individual in the Soviet Union with private means. Possession of

inherited wealth is becoming less possible in the western world, but even today a small measure of private means provides independence and a basis for objective judgment and criticism which can be a healthy asset against complacent or enforced conformities. That Eisenstein, self-supporting, should have achieved so much in face of Moscow's and Hollywood's opposition is a measure of his strength of character as well as of the scope of his mind.

Sergei Mikhailovitch Eisenstein was born on January 23rd, 1898, in Riga, Latvia, the son of a Christianised Jew, one of the city engineers. His mother was a Russian lady of independent means.

Eisenstein's life falls into the form of a prologue and three acts.

In the Prologue he grew up introspective and self-absorbed. His extrovert father and selfish mother neglected him and each other except when it suited their purpose. They left him tied to the apron strings of his peasant nurse to whom he transferred his affections. These early experiences warped his character, developing inhibitions which permanently affected his sexual relationships. He never conquered his shyness, was never a good mixer, was difficult to approach.

During his adolescence no one guided his tastes, which were groping towards the arts. His father wanted him to study engineering. Sergei compromised by studying architecture in Petrograd. His hobbies ranged through the visual arts with a particular bias towards the circus, music hall and other theatrical eccentricities. He found his ideal figure in the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, painter, sculptor, engineer, architect and anatomist.

He experienced none of the pressures that provoked the revolution of 1917. On its first day he threaded his way through the crowds, observing their behaviour with great interest, to arrive at the theatre, for which he had booked, only to find it closed. Disappointed, he went home to his studies and stayed with them until the university life around him was disrupted by civil war. Forced at last to make his choice, he naturally turned from the way of his parents to that of the vast majority of his fellow students. He joined the Red Army, first to build defences and then to use his wicked, even perverse, sense of humour in pictorial propaganda. Hard work and the enthusiasm of the convert carried him through a harsh and brutal experience for which his upbringing would otherwise have given him a repulsion. He had earned the privilege of completing his studies at the Government's expense. But not as an architect. Still without guidance, Eisenstein had come under the influence of a former instructor in Japanese and now decided to move to the University of Moscow where he could continue studying the language with its system of mounting visual symbols to create words. So ends the Prologue.

With the opening of Act One Eisenstein found himself in Moscow, suspect as any stranger is in an atmosphere of revolution, without a ration book and penniless until the new term opened at the University. The hungry Eisenstein never reported for that term or any other term. Through a chance meeting with a boyhood friend from Riga, he got a job of scene painting with Pletnyov at the Proletkult Theatre, and with it the right to his share of the little food that was going. For four years he worked exuberantly through periods of appalling famine, disease and inflation, developing his ideas of stage design and direction. While he shed his eccentric approach to the drama, he swung so far the other way as to reject the theatre itself. He tried to make a play happen in a factory among the workers. But this he found more artificial than his former circus tricks and finally he stumbled on the cinema.

Now the whole rich range of his former studies, the composition in paintings of the Italian renaissance, the character of Leonardo and his contemporaries as analysed by Freud, the mounting of hieroglyphs in Japanese, the studied poses of the Kabuki school of acting, all the stories and poems he had devoured in Russian, English and the other languages he had mastered, together with his experiments in the Soviet theatre—all these experiences became synthesized in his approach to the expression of his ideas in film.

He persuaded the Proletkult Theatre to make its next production directly as a motion picture. The result was *Strike* (1924) which he regarded as a failure but which had a gratifying success in France and Germany. *Strike* was a simple subject with a set of type characters in the manner of a *commedia dell'arte*, but the violent manner of its telling must have come as a shock after the conventional humdrum style of the story films which had so far been produced in Russia. Yet it was a pigmy compared with his next film *Potemkin*, which rang a bell round the world; muffled by censorship as it was, its reverberations are heard to this day. If

Eisenstein had been content to live off his hump, so to speak, from then on, he would have remained Moscow's top director, a rouble millionaire and the darling of all the Central Committees. But Eisenstein had a tireless brain that would not be denied. In *Potemkin* he had only scratched the potentialities of cinema. He never surpassed the film as a complete work of art, but his later achievements, rougher and less shapely, dug far deeper in to the mine of the cinema's resources.

As Marie Seton suggests, if Griffith can be said to have added a third dimension to the flat image of the screen, Eisenstein in his next two films certainly toyed with a fourth. He made the mistake of assuming that the average audience has a brain and can react *en masse* to an intellectual argument, whereas this assumption merely leads to the splitting of the audience into two camps, who then become hostile: those who can follow the argument and those who are soon lost. Their mutual resentment diverts any attempt to follow the argument of the film and sends the whole audience home in varying degrees of frustration.

If Eisenstein could have worked for a selective audience, he would have been encouraged to make experiments reaching bounds undreamed of in these days. As it is, we have to content ourselves with *October* and *Old and New*, which for all their incompleteness did pave the way for the founding and the imaginative developments of the documentary school in Great Britain and later in other countries.

Briefly, his method in these films was to drop the time and space continuity of film story-telling and to interpret subjects, chosen for him by the appropriate committees, with his own arguments, satirising reaction and extolling Bolshevism. His style was militant, he pommelled his audiences' imagination with a rain of images, beautifully composed, but it was not the nature of each image so much as the selection, order of assembly and timing that built up his scorn against the Tsarists, his fury against the interventionists and his painful love for the struggles of the Russian people to rehabilitate themselves.

By 1929 he had become a symbol of Soviet aspirations, more potent abroad, in spite of censorship, than at home, where the inarticulate audience lacked the imagination to assimilate his appeal to the intellect. At the end of Act One, the happiest because the least frustrated period of his life, he was awarded leave of absence abroad with Alexandrov, his assistant, and Tisse, his cameraman, to take a bow, refresh his mind and possibly make a film. And each was given twenty-five American dollars to do it on. In fact they set foot in Europe almost as penniless as they were to return.

Act Two covers his travels abroad, the naive crusader buffeted about between friends and enemies, enjoying high honour, smeared with vicious political innuendo, tempted by western comfort, longing to make a film that would appeal in both camps, enjoying Europe, dazzled and disappointed by Hollywood and finding peace in Mexico, only to overstay his leave, fall foul of his backers and return to Moscow in economic disgrace. The whole story is here in this book, naturally told with a bias of sympathy towards Eisenstein and yet told honestly enough to suggest the exasperation which his inhibitions must have caused to his friends as much as to his enemies.

And yet Act Two, wily enough, had its triumph. Cinema in the west benefited greatly from its contact with him. He was like a spearhead for the art. He pricked and goaded people out of their complacencies. He turned their minds over and often shamed them out of their ruts. If Act Two had never happened, the cinema in the west would have been so much the poorer.

However, this was no compensation for Eisenstein. Here he was, in Act Three, back in Moscow after three years' absence, out of touch and under a cloud. His silent films were now regarded as pretty, formalistic poems, out of tune with the new age of Socialist Construction. Socialist realism—plain, down-to-earth newsreelism with no appeal to the imagination—was (and still is) the current policy in the arts. Eisenstein's theories and experiments were considered only of use as a training exercise for new film directors. His ideas for productions were turned down one after another. On top of all this, scandals raged around the handling of the material he had shot for the Mexican project. In spite of all the quarrels and insults that passed between him and Upton Sinclair, his backer, he naively imagined that he would receive the material in Moscow for editing. Some of it finally arrived fourteen years later in 1946, shaped into two films, *Thunder over Mexico* by the Hollywood producer Sol Lesser and *Time in the Sun*, a labour of love by Marie Seton herself. Miss Seton is objective enough to print Eisenstein's opinion of the two jobs. In a letter to Georges Sadoul,



An Eisenstein image : "Que Viva Mexico!"

the distinguished French film historian and critic, Eisenstein wrote: "*Ce qu'ils en ont fait comme montage est plus que navrant*". Among the 200 excellent illustrations in the book there is a photograph of Eisenstein taken at the time. At the age of forty-eight he looks an old man.

During these fourteen years he supported himself by teaching at the Institute of Cinematography and by making four films of which he was allowed to complete two. In 1935 at the conference to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Soviet film industry he was criticised by every speaker and was awarded an ostensibly minor decoration. His first sound film, *Bezhin Meadow*, on which he worked for two years, was condemned for its formalism and its political and sociological inadequacy and was never shown publicly. By 1937 he had become humbled and frustrated almost past endurance. But it appears that one person who never lost his respect for this great artist was Stalin himself.

In the face of much opposition Eisenstein was offered the historical subject *Alexander Nevsky*, on condition that he would reverse his previous policy and accept a cast of professional actors and a co-director who knew how to handle them. The result in 1938 was a triumph for Stalin, Eisenstein and for many who "had always known" but seemed to have too soon forgotten that Eisenstein "had it in him". Certainly the project was a compromise: it gave Eisenstein scope for a finely composed pageant and opportunities for experiment in the mounting of sound, and it lacked the sociological demands of a modern realistic theme which his critics had found him unwilling to meet. Ironically, it fulfilled the current Party line in being intensely nationalistic and in fact anti-German. In less than a year the Party was hobnobbing with the Nazis and Eisenstein was forced to tag along too. (Was he ever a Party member? Miss Seton does not say). To show compliance he made one return to the stage and directed a production of *The Valkyrie* at the Bolshoi Theatre. *Alexander Nevsky*, of course, was withdrawn.

But at last material prosperity had come and with it a Doctorate of Arts, the Order of Lenin and the dominant artistic position in Mosfilm. By the autumn of 1941 Hitler had bent back the Party Line, *Nevsky* was on the screen again, *The Valkyrie* withdrawn, and Eisenstein was with Mosfilm in Alma Ata preparing *Ivan the Terrible Part One*, which was completed in 1945. In the Soviet cinema the end justifies the time and money spent. And again the film bosses were satisfied.

But Eisenstein was not to be lucky a third time. In *Part Two* he came up against the Central Committee for the last time. He was censured for pre-occupation with court intrigues and for neglecting the national aspects of Ivan's reign. He was not the only film maker to be criticised adversely, but his was the only film of the time which proved incapable of revision. His individualism defeated all efforts to bend his work in the prescribed direction.

His heart gave way under the strain. He was an invalid for two years and died on February 10th, 1948. This book is more than an adequate memorial: it is a parable of the conflicts that the individual must endure among the intolerances of this century.

NEWSREELS ACROSS THE WORLD, by Peter Baechlin and Maurice Muller-Strauss. Illustrated. (UNESCO, 10/6.)

Reviewed by Duncan Crow

As the cold war argues on, Unesco continues to proclaim the liberties of the mind. Among its self-imposed tasks is a series of studies dealing with the principal media of mass communication, "in fulfilment of Unesco's constitutional obligation to promote 'the free flow of ideas by word and image' in order to further 'mutual understanding among people'". This book is one of these studies. Originally published in French as *La Presse Filmée*, it now appears in an English edition, adapted by James Beveridge, and presents a very useful analysis of the news film set-up in the world today. Its chapters cover not only the structure of the newsreel industry and the production and distribution methods employed, but also the presentation and contents of newsreels themselves. In addition there is a more detailed survey of news films in five sample countries chosen because they illustrate different types of national situation. A final chapter considers the changing relationship between newsreels, television and screen magazines.

The great majority of the world's cinemas include a newsreel in their normal programmes; indeed in some countries this screening is obligatory. Ubiquity, added to the heightened influence of the motion picture compared with other forms of mass media, gives to the newsreel an exceptional importance as an instrument of information, and, as the authors are careful to point out, this instrument "may become a servant of falsehood as well as of truth." But though newsreels appear in most cinema programmes throughout the world, they are only a supplement; "no one", says a writer in the *Motion Picture Herald*, "goes to the theatre to get news". Whether this statement is too sweeping is beside the point. The fact is that the cinema provides a catholic audience with entertainment and, "as a programme supplement, newsreels are naturally subject to the principles governing production of full-length films, and particularly to the principle which has been expressed as follows: 'to seek to satisfy the greatest possible number of spectators by providing them with the relaxation they expect when they take their seats.'" With this principle in mind, it is not surprising that

the variety of subjects presented in newsreels is restricted and that their informative value is often low.

While the main purpose of the authors is to analyse rather than to criticise, an undertone of cautious criticism is present throughout their book. Particularly is this so in connection with international reportage as it appears in newsreels, and indeed it is on this aspect that they not unnaturally keep a main eye. Too often the newsreel is the servant neither of truth nor falsehood but only of irrelevance.

In the economic structure of the newsreel industry the reader who is at all familiar with the world of films will find little to surprise him. Here, as in the field of features, is the dominance of large companies, the importance of exhibition interests, and in some countries the intervention of government. Details of the form this structure takes in fifty-nine countries, as well as many other particulars of newsreel production and distribution, are to be found in a long summary at the end of the book.

THE GREAT CHARLIE, by Robert Payne. Foreword by G. W. Stonier. Illustrated. (Andre Deutsch, 16s.)

Reviewed by Jeffrey Bernard

Apparently the first clown was Pan, the son of Hermes; since then, Mr. Payne tells us, Pierrot, Debureau, Scaramouche and Grimaldi, to name the more familiar, have all contributed considerably to the make up of Charles Chaplin. He does concede, however, that the greatest contribution to Chaplin was London.

There on the embankment were the shuffling drunks, the cabman with bad feet who was to provide the world with its most famous walk, and the horror of blindness, that, in Mr. Payne's words, "was to become transformed into the quiet horror of the blind girl in *City Lights*." Life was hard, and Chaplin had seen the inside of the doss houses, spent dismal days looking for work, sold newspapers, slept on park benches, and seen his mother removed to an asylum. His first music-hall contract was signed for him by his brother in 1906, and then things began to improve. He went to Paris, and became a member of Fred Karno's troupe of comedians in the following year. When he went to America for the second

The NEW

GALLERY

REGENT STREET LONDON W1.

Tele: REG. 2255

IN THE VERY HEART OF THE WEST END

SHOWING the WORLD'S GREATEST PICTURES

Continuous daily 12.30 to 11 p.m. Sunday from 4.30

POPULAR PRICES

STALLS: 3/3, 4/3, 5/6 CIRCLE: 5/6, 6/6, 8/6

Special Low Prices before 4.0 p.m.—3/3, 4/3
(Except Saturdays and Holidays)

See daily press announcements for current programme

Studio One

Adj. Oxford Circus Underground, W.1.
GERRARD 3300

SEASONAL PRESENTATION OF

OUTSTANDING FRENCH BRITISH & AMERICAN FILMS

Continuous Daily 12.45-11 p.m. Sundays 4 p.m.-10.15 p.m.

PRICES:
3/-; 4/3; 6/-; 8/-
Bookable: 8/-

Special Terms for Parties

Studio Two (News) Theatre in same building
Price 1/- in all parts

time, he announced to the Statue of Liberty: "I give you warning, I have come to conquer America." Four years later he had begun to conquer the world, but in his character of the tramp, the experiences of London were never far away. Nothing, it seems, was ever strong enough to wipe them away.

The story itself is familiar, and just to relate it is insufficient. Mr. Payne seems to write for the occasion. His insistent references to Greek mythology (the book was called *The Great God Pan* in America) make it clear that he regards Chaplin as the spiritual descendant of Pan. If Chaplin has read this book, he must indeed be a very surprised man, to read of himself compared to Keats, Pan and the latest photograph of Mr. Winston Churchill. Although Mr. Payne seems to know his facts, and genuinely appreciates the versatility of the greatest comedian in the world, he is too involved with Chaplin in the way that a psychoanalyst might be with a patient who possesses a rare neurosis. While the book contains a good account of Chaplin's life and work, it reads too much like a case history, the case itself being misunderstood.

The Great Charlie is easily readable, though it could do with more anecdote. But I am left feeling that Mr. Payne is too emotionally involved with Charlie, and is still worrying over an unpredictable subject.

TALLULAH, by Tallulah Bankhead. (Gollancz, 16s.)

Reviewed by Harold Lang

As with love, so with talent; though possible to predicate the circumstances in which they are likely to appear, both ultimately retain their mystery. Amateurs of the psychological generalisation will find *Tallulah* a frustrating book, for there are few good theories to be mined which Tallulah herself has not vouchsafed with fascination. If her constant anxiety lest she "is being overlooked", coupled with a self-abasing respect for "her betters", created her talent, then many of our aunts and landladies would have Wardour Street at white heat.

It seems that only in England was Miss Bankhead truly "Tallulah". Here private impulse and public mask collaborated perfectly. She, sophisticated creature, is doubtless aware of the reasons that make this so much more possible in a foreign country than in one's own. The chapters dealing with her eight years in London ("the happiest and most exciting in my life") have an authenticity that cannot be gainsaid. Here she gave loud and joyful birth to the "Bankhead Legend", insistently confessed to Drugs and Orgies and described herself as "pure as the driven slush." These chapters at least have so genuinely Waugh an ambience that they hypnotised me into the conviction that at no time but in "the twenties" could anyone have been called Francis Laking or Gwen Farrar.

Later, "consideration like an angel came", she "won her ethical marbles"; but "a legend prospers even when its owner relaxes and waxes nunlike", and the division that holds between public and private personalities tells on the style of all the other chapters. With a doomed good humour she has pressed the many mysteriously contradictory accents of her own life into the expected hoarse drawl. Seeing that she realises so clearly that a reputation is an

uncappable geyser, it would be churlish to regret her game slogging-away to make everything "typical" and not cheat us of our laughs.

The cinema has never taken full advantage of her very special talents. In the 1930's she could say, "I have made six films, and they were stinkers." She was cast, incredibly, as sombre, tortured women suffering vile husbands bravely; and I clearly remember her look of chafing at this ill-fitting bridle. Her comments on the film industry are harsh, intelligent, and quite unexceptionable. Years later, in *Czarina*, Lubitsch came nearest to exploiting her flamboyant, self-derisory comic gift.

Readers of the *New Yorker* series on *The Red Badge of Courage* may cheer emotionally as they read her treatment of the fascinating Louis B. Mayer. Summoned to the Presence, she blasted her way into his office rather than ever admit he had kept her waiting, and, with a wail of scorn, forcibly prevented him from going down on his knees to act tearfully out the suicide of Jean Harlow's husband. Failing better treatment in the future, Tallulah may well go down in screen history for this alone.

ROUND-UP

NOVEL: Richard Brooks' *The Producer* (Heinemann, 15s.), of which one chapter was printed in a recent *SIGHT AND SOUND*, is a Hollywood novel by a Hollywood director. The best part of it is on the surface; its shop-talk is entertaining enough in a familiar deadpan, cynical way, but the attempt to create a serious character study of the producer who wants to make a "good" film but is forced to compromise, is conceived on a pretentious "gimmick" level. Ultimately, the values of the book seem corrupt. FILM STUDIO: *A Day with the Film Makers* (Pitman 10s. 6d.), by Francis Rodker, A.R.P.S., director of animation and special effects for the Shell Film Unit, is a pleasantly written account for young people of what happens in a film studio. The publishers' claim that it will also interest adults is, however, exaggerated. GUIDE: *Scandinavian Cinema* (Falcon Press, 12s. 6d.), by Forsyth Hardy, an authority on the subject, will be reviewed in the next *SIGHT AND SOUND*. Meanwhile, it appears an informative, generously illustrated, survey of its subject, competently produced.

MAGAZINES: *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Editors: Lo Duca, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and André Bazin) continues its high standard. The July-August '52 number contained an interesting history of the adventurous Ursulines cinema by Roger Régent, an article by Norman MacLaren on his stereoscopic films, and a tribute to Gene Kelly (Jean Myrsine). October included, notably, reviews of the Venice festival, of *Othello* (Michel Dorsday), and an article by Lo Duca on *avant-garde* film-makers, in which he appears to reproach a number of them for not being surrealists. There have been interesting things in *Films in Review* (Editor: Henry Hart): von Sternberg's "On Life and Film", from an unpublished manuscript, an account of John Huston at work, Herman G. Weinberg's "Coffee, Brandy and Cigars", enjoyable serialised gossip. Seymour Stern, however, writes an unpleasantly biased notice of Marie Seton's *Eisenstein*, and Theodore Huff is disappointingly superficial on *Limelight*.

Alan Cameron

Now that the British Film Institute, after so many vicissitudes, has become such a vigorous and successful organisation, it is only right that we should recall the faith and vision of those who formed it way back in the early thirties.

Among these none has a greater claim on our gratitude than Alan Cameron whose recent death at the early age of 58 we are so deeply mourning. For it was undoubtedly largely due to him that, despite all the difficulties and obstructions, the Film Institute was brought into being. The Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, of which he was Honorary Secretary, after two years of patient enquiry and research produced its report, *The Film in National Life*, which was almost entirely the product of Cameron's brain and pen.

He was a Governor of the Institute for something like 15 years and did fine work in that capacity, but perhaps his greatest contribution was in connection with the National Film Library, whose work he regarded as the most important of all the Institute's activities.

To have known Alan Cameron personally, as I did over many years, was an enrichment of life. His was a great and lovable personality. A brilliant administrator, a scholar, a robust and stimulating intellectual, he never lost the common touch or his deep faith in the ultimate good in humanity. He loved good food, good wine and good company; his flow of conversation and his

persistent good humour were a perpetual source of joy to all who knew him.

His life was full of achievement and there can be no greater epitaph than that. But among all his successes, I am sure that nothing gave him greater personal satisfaction than the conviction, which he expressed to me at the lunch we gave him on the eve of his departure to Ireland last year, that the Institute was now firmly established and was doing a vital job—promoting public interest in the cinema and encouraging its artistic growth and development. The Institute itself is in great measure a fitting memorial to the devotion and enthusiasm of this courageous man. We shall all miss him sadly in the years to come.—FRANK HOARE.

G. F. Hankin

We also regret to record the death of Mr. G. F. Hankin, M.A., and extend our deep sympathy to Mrs. Hankin (Miss Mary Field). As an inspector of the then Board of Education, and a representative of the Historical Association, Mr. Hankin rendered valuable services to the British Film Institute in its early years when it was concerned with the promotion of visual aids.

More recently he had taken an active interest in the Institute's film appreciation work in schools and by his enthusiasm and breadth of vision earned the respect and affection of those on the Institute's staff and in the Society of Film Teachers who came to know him for the first time.

* * * * *

Film books for your book tokens

EISENSTEIN *by Marie Seton*

An exhaustive personal portrait of Sergei M. Eisenstein relating the man to his work by an author whose three-year association with him from 1932 gave her an opportunity to study his personality, his theories and practice. This is a handsome book of 533 pages with nearly 200 illustrations, many of which are published for the first time.

Published by John Lane. Cloth Binding. 35/9 post free

FILM FORM *by Eisenstein*

Essays in film theory including: The Filmic Fourth Dimension—Methods in Montage—The Structure of the Film, etc.

280 pages. *Cloth Binding. 19/- post free*

QUE VIVA MEXICO *by Eisenstein*

The scenario printed here of this renowned film is the most complete extant record of the film he planned to create had he been allowed to complete it. With 36 illustrations from the film.

Cloth Binding. 89 pages. 15/6 post free

THE FILM SENSE *by Eisenstein*

A new edition (1948) of Eisenstein's first book of theory.

220 pages. *Well illustrated. Cloth Binding. 13/3 post free*

CHARLIE CHAPLIN *by Theodore Huff*

A detailed and informative life of Chaplin from his early days in Fred Karno's troupe up to the present day. The book includes an index of Chaplin's films, titles listed chronologically with full cast lists and other production details.

Cloth Binding. 320 pages. 146 photographs 25/9 post free

THE GREAT CHARLIE—a biography of the Tramp *by Robert Payne*

A study of Charlie Chaplin's screen personality.

Cloth Binding. Illustrated. 287 pages. 16/9 post free

FILM AND ITS TECHNIQUES

by Raymond Spottiswoode

The Author has had wide experience in film making, both with John Grierson's original documentary production group and in the American Film Industry as Producer, Technical Supervisor and Director. In 1950 he undertook the design and technical direction of the 3-dimensional films which were shown at the Telecinema during the Festival of Britain. This book sets out to explain Documentary Film Techniques to the amateur cinematographer including the usage of the latest technical advances in sound and picture.

500 pages. *Illustrated. Cloth Binding. 42/9 post free*

SCANDINAVIAN FILM

by Forsyth Hardy

A historical survey of the development of the film in Norway, Denmark and Sweden from the beginnings up to the present day.

Cloth Binding. 62 pages. Illustrated. 15/6 post free

DOCUMENTARY FILM *by Paul Rotha, Sinclair Road & Richard Griffith*

This famous, exhaustive and authoritative survey of the world documentary movement completely revised and brought up to date in 1952.

412 pages. *Cloth Binding. 100 Illustrations 42/9 post free*

Please note — Any of these books may be ordered on 7 days approval — **We exchange book tokens**

Better Books Ltd. BOOKSELLERS OF 94 CHARING CROSS RD., LONDON, W.C.

* * * * *

CORRESPONDENCE

The Top Ten

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—The directors and critics have had their say. Why not invite your readers to make their own selection? In addition to encouraging reader-participation (no magazine likes to feel that it exists in a void) the results might prove useful when choosing future National Film Theatre programmes. Since there would be little point in giving the selections of individual readers, the tabulation of results would take up little valuable space in SIGHT AND SOUND. A list of, say, the 50 top films would suffice and might prove illuminating.

Yours faithfully,

185, Sandon Road, Stafford.

T. A. BROSTER.

We welcome Mr. Broster's suggestion and invite readers to send us their personal lists of the ten films which have impressed them most strongly. Results will be published in the April/June issue of "Sight and Sound", and lists should be received by March 1st.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—This is a voice from Egypt, the Eastern Country, where the art of Cinema is now in great progress, and these are the films which impressed me most personally:

1. *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming).
2. *City Lights* (Charlie Chaplin).
3. *The Lost Moment* (Martin Gabel).
4. *Odd Man Out* (Carol Reed).
5. *The Great Waltz* (Julien Duvivier).
6. *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (William Dieterle).
7. *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock).
8. *La Symphonie Pastorale* (Jean Delannoy).
9. *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann).
10. *Domani e Troppo Tardi* (Léonide Moguy).

S. DESSOUKY,

Alexandria.

Film Critic, *Mabda Magazine*.

Les Enfants Terribles

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—Mr. Lambert's opinion of *Les Enfants Terribles* seems to be based on its lack of congruity with the book.

This kind of criticism is sometimes valid; often it is not. Cocteau is a particular example where it is not, because, of course, the cinema is a medium of his own.

I haven't read the book. Most of what Mr. Lambert says is no doubt true. But I think it is irrelevant because the film is very good. The direction is neither stiff nor passionless and the atmosphere and isolation of this microcosm for two is wonderfully described.

The intrusive Agathe and Gérard are pale and distant (but not incompetent) because they cannot break into this esoteric existence which we are made to feel is reality, and the formal, progressive music gives this existence an interior tightness and foreshadows the inevitable outcome (as did Bach's *Fantasia in Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*). The symbolism of sleep and mirrors, less intrusive than in *Orphée*, dimly suggests the wider significance of myth.

The intrusion of M. Cocteau himself does admit partial failure but it turns out to be remarkably unobtrusive.

A book requires a large, if subconscious, feat of imagination from the reader which at once becomes definitive, and he resents any attempt to substitute other images even though these may be the author's own. I can only believe this is why Mr. Lambert gave this film so cursory a notice.

Yours faithfully,

76, Bryanston Court, W.1.

WILLIAM DORRELL.

The Lost Raspberry

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—At least one interesting point emerged from the recent National Film Theatre programme.

I refer to the feature composed of extracts from famous films of the past, and in particular to the Charles Laughton episode from *If I Had a Million*. It is apparent that this celebrated episode has two endings.

Earlier this year I saw *If I Had a Million* in Paris, and in this version Laughton climaxed the sequence with a resounding "raspberry", whereas in the National Film Theatre version he indicates his sentiments with a vigorous digital gesture.

No doubt the two versions were shot to accord with the differing British and American views of propriety.

Yours faithfully,

186, Mawneys Road, Romford, Essex.

F. B. JACOBS.

Mr. Jacobs is quite right. The British censor would not allow more than "a vigorous digital gesture" and a mild whistle. Laughton was allowed to blow a raspberry to the rest of the world.—Editor.

THE SOUND TRACK

Simplicity is the keynote to the sound-track of Chaplin's *Limelight*. Technically, it belongs roughly to the period of *The Blue Angel*, when each element of the track was still weighed and tested and used on its own. Even now, an examination of this aspect of Chaplin's work still suggests a man not yet accepting the talkie as routine movie-making. The artist can now talk to his audience; and every word must be planned and delivered with eloquence. He must at all costs use the full possibilities of the new invention. Sound effects can give additional atmosphere; a burst of clapping to take us into a dream of music-hall fame or a barrel-organ to bring a 1914 London street scene to life. The music is no longer entrusted to the chance successes of the individual cinema orchestras and pianists; the precious main theme can now be recorded direct on to the film and exploited under the exact control of the composer.

The result is a refreshingly fundamental sound-track, pruned to essentials and fascinating in its restraint. When Sidney Chaplin and Claire Bloom meet in the restaurant, background sounds are maintained only until the two are in conversation; then, logically, they disappear and the scene is played in complete silence except for their voices. A meeting with Chaplin in a pub also starts with street noises and bar chatter but, as soon as the conversation between the principal characters begins, they fade quickly away. It makes a pleasant change from the over-fussy, "realistic" tracks of most modern films, and is more logical anyway.

Chaplin's music is emotional, repetitive and elementary: everything that good screen music should be. Listen to the theme "La Violette" that Padilla provided for Chaplin's scoring of *City Lights* (Columbia DX 1724) and compare it with the main tune of *Limelight*. The same naive flair for the right degree of nostalgia is evident; even the treatment is in the style of the early 'thirties. As Claire Bloom opens her eyes for the first time in Chaplin's room the theme fades gently in; it is possible to estimate in advance the exact points at which it will be re-cued and the satisfaction of hearing it return is irresistible. As she cries, "I'm walking, I'm walking", her excited voice is swamped by an upsurge of music; there are no twists or stunts, only a perfect sense of basic film form.

The audition scene is a masterpiece of simplicity and timing. An empty stage and a cathedral-like hush; a single command for lights; brief words of introduction; a rehearsal piano, acoustically perfect and unhindered by "off-stage" orchestral embellishments; a tense silence as the dance ends; congratulations, factual and unemotional; lights off, the solitary abandoned figure of Chaplin in a corner; finally, a flash of incidental music as the camera closes in on his sad face. There are no electronic sounds, no slick orchestrations of folk tunes, no echo chamber tricks; but the track (as well as the images) sticks in the mind a month after seeing the film.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

GOTHAM BOOK MART

THE TELEVISION PROGRAM

its writing, direction and production by Edw. Stasheff and Rudy Bretz, fully illustrated. \$4.95

FILM AND ITS TECHNIQUES

by Raymond Spottiswoode, illustrated by Jean-Paul Ladouceur \$7.50

RISKS AND RIGHTS

in publishing, television, radio, motion pictures, advertizing, etc., by Samuel Spring. \$7.50

THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN FILM

a critical history by Lewis Jacobs, profusely illustrated. \$6.00

Brochure listing books, magazines and pamphlets on the film. List of recordings by poets reading their own. Free on request.

41 West 47th Street, New York 36, N.Y.

"A portrait of Rank which with every stroke grows more sympathetic, more entertaining and stranger. Acutely enjoyable—and valuable."

DILYS POWELL, in *The Sunday Times*.

Mr. Rank

A Study of J. Arthur Rank
and British Films
by

ALAN WOOD

Published at 20/- net by

HODDER & STOUGHTON, LONDON, E.C.4.

YOU DON'T PAY FOR THESE SHOWS!

★

*Have YOU taken advantage
YET of this grand new scheme
of C.W.S. mobile film displays?*

★

If your club, society, or organisation wishes to put on a first rate film show for its members, FREE, please contact the C.W.S. Film Department without delay on whichever date you wish, a mobile film display unit with splendid programmes of interest, educational, and C.W.S. propaganda subjects, will visit you. Shows can be given at any time of the day or evening practically anywhere—whether an electric supply is available or not. Thousands of these shows have already been given in every part of the country.

All you have to do is:

Provide a suitable hall that can be blacked out.

Secure an audience of not less than 90 persons.

Arrange that no charge for admission be made.

Simple isn't it. If you wish, a special film day can be arranged, with a show for the ladies in the afternoon, early evening for the youngsters, and a later show for mixed adults. Special lunch time shows can be arranged, too.

**FOR THE LOCAL ADVERTISING OF THE
SHOWS, POSTERS WILL BE SUPPLIED**

Phone - Wire - Write

C.W.S. FILM DEPARTMENT

1 BALLOON STREET, MANCHESTER 4
Blackfriars 1212—Films, Wholesale, Manchester

99 LEMAN STREET, LONDON, E.1
Royal 7221 — Film Wholesale, (Edo), London

BROAD QUAY, BRISTOL
Bristol 20061 — Film Wholesale, Bristol

If these precepts of Stanislavsky's are applied to the cinema it will appear that the entire period of the silent film was in essence a development and elaboration of the school of acting linked with the search for the truth of physical action. In this sense the period of the silent film provided all that was basic and necessary for the later stages, when sound and speech came in. All my work with the speaking actor, our common search for realism in his acting, have proved that it is in the field of gesture, meaning the primary physical movement born of emotion, that the actor must particularly seek to perfect his technique.

I knew what it was that frightened me in the acting of artists who did not belong to the Stanislavsky school. It was that their theatrical gesture was stronger than their feeling, and in some particularly bad cases the gesture had become fixed and conventional and quite unconnected with feeling. The Stanislavsky school does not in any circumstances admit such misconceived theatrical effects.

The screen offers the actor a special opportunity for reducing gesture to the minimum, which in itself makes it all the more expressive. The screen actor has the advantage over the stage actor that he can behave towards the spectator just as he would towards someone standing at his side: but these special opportunities demand from him the closest possible attention to complete truthfulness in the subtlest of external expressions of his state of mind.

Behind the drama or scenario there always lies some phenomenon of life disclosed in the form of conflict. This conflict is always shown in the most expressive spectacular forms. The character's every thought and feeling must lead him to physical action, and speech expressing the content of the thought must be organically fused with physical action. Such is the law of any stage or screen production. Thus physical action may and should be considered as the most important, and in most cases the decisive, element with which the actor and the producer must concern themselves from the outset. That is why Stanislavsky concentrated so much on physical action as the starting-point in the actor's assimilation of his part.

My creative experience has often given me practical confirmation of these precepts. One of the most convincing examples in this respect was my whole work on the figure of *Suvorov*. All I had learnt about *Suvorov* made me see him as a man of great external expressiveness. At our very first meeting with Cherkasov, when I was casting the part of *Suvorov*, I was struck by the singularity of his behaviour. In the middle of a rather lengthy conversation on the scenario, on the character of *Suvorov*, on my demands on the artist, Cherkasov, apparently annoyed by something I had said, suddenly got up and began taking his leave without even explaining why he was going. I was hard put to it to detain him, literally on the doorstep, and to persuade him to continue our conversation. The firmness of the decision Cherkasov had come to after what I had said, his immediate translation of the inner decision into an equally firm definite physical action, made me see at once in what a marked degree his character coincided with the magnificent temperament that ruled the often abrupt but always purposeful actions of the great general. Probably it was precisely this sudden action of Cherkasov's that gave force and persuasiveness to my words, because in the end our negotiations reached a happy conclusion. Later on I saw how correct my choice had been. The whole of the work on the part of *Suvorov* was thus immediately set on a firm foundation because it rested on the natural elements of the artist's individuality.

One of the most difficult forms of acting is the monologue, which the artist has to deliver without the direct support of his partners and without the external impulses which could give him a direct perception of his links with his surroundings. I have often met with this difficulty, and every time I was helped out by a firm determination to integrate the artist's speech with an impulse, perhaps unrealised but nevertheless indispensably present, to perform some physical action. I recall how we were working on *Suvorov*'s speech addressed to his soldiers at the critical moment of the terrible crossing of the Alps. The speech is a long one, being a text scarcely altered from contemporary memoirs. To deliver it without falling into rhetorical declamation was very difficult. The artist's first attempts sounded either maudlin or pompous. Even when some of the phrases were successful they still did not integrate into a whole. We found the solution to the problem in *Suvorov*'s own words: "*Very well; bury our military glory here; but bury me*

with it. I will not give up my grey hairs to dishonour. I will not surrender. Dig my grave; bury me here!" We realised that direct physical action could be linked with these words. The actor had only to convince himself that to *Suvorov* the grave was no empty phrase but an actual pit which the soldiers would have to dig at his command, and in which his dead body would be laid before he would make the least concession to fear. He had to believe that the grave he was talking of was not a conventional image accompanied by a gesture into empty space, but that the grave was actually there, and all he had to do was to take a few steps and show where it was to be dug. As soon as the actor realised the possibility of a definite action, there at once appeared what we call the rhythm of acting, the swift movement of a man who had taken a firm decision, a well-defined gesture far removed from sentimental or false dignity.

It is not only in separate fragments or scenes that unity and continuity of action are necessary. The actions of the actors carry the characters created by them through the whole play and bring their destinies to fulfilment, to the final aim of the general development of the play or picture and the final formulation of its ideas. Attaining purposefulness and continuity in this general movement means making the play realistic. In the general purposeful movement of the action every actor must have his personal basic aim, which he achieves at the moment of the play's ending. The directed impulse of his will, in opposition to the surrounding circumstances which help or hinder the attainment of the final aim, ensures what Stanislavsky called the "follow-through" of the actor in the play.

It is easier for the stage actor to achieve this "follow through" than for the screen actor. During rehearsals the stage play is, as a rule, run through in its entirety. Besides, on the stage the actor can continue his search for continuity in his living of the part as it passes through the whole play. In the cinema the purely technical conditions of camera work seldom afford this opportunity. In the great majority of cases it is quite impossible to rehearse the scenario as a whole.

Nevertheless, thorough and concentrated work on obtaining this follow-through of Stanislavsky's is as necessary to the screen actor as it is to the stage actor. The problem of preserving the unity and continuity of an acted part lies mainly with the producer. This demands first of all intensive imaginative work, the faculty of being always able to see the future picture in its entirety, in the form not of abstract situations and aims but of animated, visible and audible scenes; it demands secondly an unflinching visual memory which can retain vivid impressions of everything already acted by the artist. Only when he possesses and constantly develops these faculties can the producer help the actor in the complicated conditions of filmmaking, which force the actor to play disjointed parts of his role without an immediate perception of the natural sequence. I remember how when making the film *Mother* I purposely began with the last part of the picture, which demanded the maximum effort from the actress: the mother, tearing herself from the body of her dead son, lifts up the red banner and walks towards the onrushing cossacks. This is the supreme moment of the part. Both in the beginning and the middle of the film there were scenes demanding strong emotional expression, but I realised that none of them should be allowed to equal the power of that final scene.

V. Toporkov in his book *K. S. Stanislavsky at Rehearsal* quotes him as saying about great art: "Should you ask me how I would describe it, I would answer: it is art having a super-aim and follow-through action". "This means", remarks Toporkov, "that Stanislavsky's main demand upon art was that it should have idea-content". We all know from personal experience that lack of idea-content, subjective stylisation, formalistic artifices, breaking away from the life of the people and creative popular activity, all this means the death of art and the destruction of the artist's talent. What Stanislavsky conventionally calls "super-aim" has become to us an actual part of practical social activity.

When working on the first version of *Admiral Nakhimov* I failed because I misunderstood the picture's "super-aim" and therefore suffered a wrong interpretation of it. Taking a superficial view of the main aim (that of showing *Nakhimov* to the people as a great admiral who had swayed the development of the Russian navy for many years to come) I let myself be carried away by the invention of imaginary moments in his private life, from a mere wish to make the picture more entertaining. To alter the first version of the picture it was not enough to make partial isolated corrections. The

whole action of the picture had to be changed. By throwing out the unnecessary scenes and shooting some entirely new ones which radically altered the image of Nakhimov, we ultimately succeeded in assessing and interpreting the "super-aim" correctly.

* * *

The idea-content of the picture must be the moving force in every scene; it must live in every detail. This can be attained only when each part, and the whole picture, are perceived by producer and cast as one continuous movement in which there are no gaps between the feelings and gestures of any one of the actors, between gesture and speech, between the text and the translation into physical action of the idea it contains, between physical action and

its direct physical object, and finally between this particular aim and the general aim towards which the action as a whole is directed.

Work on a stage or a screen play may present two possibilities: either the producer and the actor discover the truth of life hidden but actually existing in the scene, or else they introduce it as a necessary correction suggested by their perception of truth trained by practical realist experience. In both cases a clear and definite method of work is imperative. This is the method Stanislavsky discovered for theatrical art, which has found tremendous new possibilities of fruitful development in cinematic art.

Stanislavsky, the great realist artist, scholar and teacher, cleared the true path on which the great realist tendencies of Russian art become the living practice of the art of socialist realism.

(HOLLYWOOD'S ANTI-RED BOOMERANG

continued from page 137)

the last reel and reproaches him for not having told him what to think, for having let him make up his own mind when young. In *The Enemy Within* many of the communists are characterised as fidgety intellectuals whom Father Leary's simple down-to-earth wisdom beats every time. In one of the dialogues in *The Red Danube* (see Exhibit A) the Mother Superior properly takes the wind out of the sails of silly old aeronautics by suggesting, only half humorously, that a really good Catholic could fly to Rome centuries ago. There is in these films a general distrust of people who read books, know anything about wicked science, people, in other words, who think and argue. One hesitates to use the word fascist in describing this attitude, for it has come to be an almost meaningless term of abuse, but the affinities with Goebbels are undeniable.

V

"It is one of the signs of democracy's vitality", wrote the American historian Jacques Barzun recently, "that attempts to define it or turn it into a creed fall short of the truth and generally sound silly." The trouble is that fictional propaganda, particularly film propaganda, needs an articulate spokesman, prepared to state his position. This, perhaps, is why none of the more serious Hollywood directors have made films about the East-West conflict and fools have been allowed to rush in and have made the Western values 'sound silly'.

The isolated, more serious films tackling contemporary problems have not been much more successful. The independently made American documentaries *Strange Victory* and *Native Land*, both only indirectly relevant to the present conflict, are decent enough but very preachy, and, like so many films of their type, appeal only to a minority audience. They suffer, besides, from the peculiar kind of anthropological glibness that much American pamphleteering betrays, whether in the 'progressive' novel or the problem picture. Nor have we in Britain produced anything to be particularly proud of. The makers of *Seven Days to Noon* sat so carefully

on the fence that they finished up by saying nothing, and the communists of *High Treason*, all heavily duffle-coated and devoted to 'modern' art, could hardly be taken seriously (though there was a sequence or two satirising communist social functions which struck home). *Top Secret* began with a good idea but soon, amidst much sniggering over ballcocks, turned into a humorless farce about a plumber called Potts. It contained a pair of communists—a deep-voiced amazon and a squeaking pansy—who somehow contrived to be even more incredible and unpleasant than the commies of the American films. It remains to wait hopefully for Sir Alexander Korda's projected version of Alan Moorehead's 'The Traitors'.

The real problem appears to be, at first sight, the finding of a satisfactory Western spokesman, and for that the precedents are not encouraging. The militant liberal whom one has met in many a well-meaning American novel is an unsatisfactory hero. Whether he is up against crooked fight promoters or unscrupulous editors, Hollywood producers or political racketeers, his fate is always the same. The heroes of *The Harder They Fall*, *That Winter*, *The Producer*, *All the King's Men*, when faced with their particular authoritarian foe, rarely have the satisfaction of doing more than hissing an elaborate moral *Sucks-Boo!* into the boss's face and then getting the sack; alternatively, they sell out. None of them would be much good against the commies.

Perhaps, then, the Western values do not lend themselves to simple dramatisation through a militant hero, and must be allowed to emerge by the way, as standards implicit in a film's approach to its particular reality. And it does not matter so much what that particular reality is: films like *The Male Animal*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Four in a Jeep*, *A Walk in the Sun*, various in subject and quality though they are, imply values to which one is not ashamed to subscribe. They make, ultimately, the only really worthwhile anti-communist gestures. And if the enemy has to be attacked direct, then let it be done honestly and with intellectual conviction. Or, better still, let us have satires on what is surely a rich subject. Another *Ninotchka* is long overdue.

BURTON MANOR

Residential College for Adult Education
Burton-in-Wirral - - - - Cheshire
Friday, February 27th-Sunday, March 1st

Film Weekend No. 2

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

A weekend residential course on Film
Appreciation - - - - Details and
application forms from The Warden

A book for children!

A Day with the Film Makers

★
By
Francis Rodker

Every boy and girl will find this book of absorbing interest. Two children are taken round a film studio, and meet the people who make films—the directors, producers, cameramen, and "effects" men. An ideal gift. Attractively produced and illustrated with photographic plates showing "behind-the-scenes" views of many outstanding British films. 10/6 net.

Pitman Parker Street · Kingsway · London · W.C.2

MR. THERM PRESENTS
Philip Harben
the famous Chef, in
PRIDE and JOY

*How to get the best results
 from your gas cooker*

**THE VITAL
 FLAME**

NARRATOR :

James McKechnie

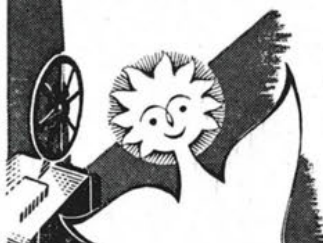
*The Gas Industry's past and present
 achievements and future potentialities*

Richard 'Mr. Pastry' Hearne
Gilbert Harding in
**THE PERFECT
 HUSBAND**

A comedy extravaganza about space heating

These *new* productions have just been added to the distinguished selection of films about the gas industry, its activities and services to the community, which Mr. Therm has sponsored. The films are available *free* to

approved borrowers; apply to your Gas Board offices or the Gas Council. An illustrated catalogue of all Films & Film Strips is issued free on application. Write to



The Gas Council Film Library · Grosvenor Place · London · SW1

**MGM's
 Matchless
 Musical
 Hits in
 16mm.**



Please apply
 to MGM Pictures,
 9 Arlington Street,
 London, S.W.1.
 for hiring
 arrangements
 to clubs, societies
 institutions
 of all kinds
 and
 private houses.

Gene Kelly in Vincente Minelli's

"AN AMERICAN IN PARIS"

Betty Hutton in George Sidney's

"ANNIE GET YOUR GUN"

Fred Astaire, Judy Garland in Charles Walters'

"EASTER PARADE"

Mickey Rooney in Rouben Mamoulian's

"SUMMER HOLIDAY"

Gene Kelly in his and Stanley Donen's

"ON THE TOWN"

Van Johnson, June Allyson in Richard Thorpe's

"TWO GIRLS AND A SAILOR"

Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers in Charles Walters'

"THE BARKLEYS OF BROADWAY"

AND MANY, MANY, MORE

South Bank **National Film Theatre** WATerloo 3232
December 21st — January 17th

Coming for Christmas !!

at

“The Bijou”

A season of Exclusive Attractions

The Road to Ruin
Passions of Men
Keystone Comedy
Suffragette News
Etc! Etc! Etc!



Sensation!
Pathos!
Fun!

★ The National Film Theatre, rechristened and dressed up as “The Bijou” for the Christmas season, will show a typical 1915 programme

January 18th — April 11th

A season of

Silent American Comedy



Harry Langdon



Buster Keaton



Harold Lloyd

The National Film Theatre is open only to Members and Associates of the British Film Institute.
Enquiries to: The British Film Institute, 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2. TEMple Bar 1642.